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THE

Wicked Woods

OF

Tobereevil.

By MISS MULHOLLAND,

AUTHOR OF "HESTER'S HISTORY," ETC.

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5500

LONG ISLAND CITY, N. Y.

THE

WICKED WOODS OF TOBEREEVIL.

CHAPTER I.

HOW THEY WERE PLANTED.

SIMON FINISTON was owner of Tobereevil, including Monasterlea; and the Wicked Woods were part of the patrimony of his race. On one side of his mansion lay long stretches of unploughed fields, and pathless bog and moor. Behind him rose undulating mountains, clothed with the rich hues of gorse and broom. The thick woods wrapped him round about, would scarce let the sun shine down upon his roof, and crowded in brilliant masses towards the horizon on the east. The Golden Mountain, which did not belong to Simon, towered against the southern sky, so that the lower hills beside it looked like the ridges of a wave upon the sea.

The lands of Tobereevil lie in a remote part of the west of Ireland. They had beauty at the worst of times; but, now that the curse has passed away, they are lovely and peaceful as a vision of Arcadia. At the time of the beginning of this story, they were sadder and drearier than it is needful to describe. The curse was upon them then. Old Simon, the miser, was lord of many mountains and moors, of many waste places that ought to have been fields, many fields that might have been gardens, many hovels that might have been comfortable homes, and some spirit-broken serfs who might have been grateful and light-hearted friends. Yet Simon of Tobereevil was rather pitied than blamed; for was he not working out the doom, and suffering the punishment, of a race accursed?

A strange story is told of this curse of the Finistons of Tobereevil. One Paul Finiston had come into the district when, as the legend saith, the country was prosperous, the people well housed and clad. He was a man who came no one knew whence, and had amassed money no one knew how. Some said he had made a fortune by usury. He had, however, the desire to make himself a gentleman; and had bought the estate of a decayed old family, which, after the usual long struggle, had dropped into the abyss of acknowledged poverty.

Yet he had no idea of stepping into other folks' shoes, of being only the successor of mightier people. He would not live under their roof, nor walk in their paths, nor even look upon the same scenes which they had looked upon. He would pull down their house, plough up their gardens, and plant trees in the spaces which they had cleared. He would sweep away their fences, and make landmarks of his own. He built a new house to his own taste, stately and handsome, and furnished it in a style of splendor which would have made his predecessors stare. The magnificence of his pictures, the costliness of his carvings and gildings, his hangings and carpetings, made a nine days' wonder in the country. His servants were a small army, his horses were said to be fine enough and numerous enough to furnish mounts for half a cavalry regiment. His wines were fit for the table of an emperor. His carriages were built luxuriously upon a design of his own. He seemed preparing to lead the life of a prince, when suddenly there fell a blight upon his work.

Had he been content, says the story, with the alterations above enumerated, he had lived his life of enjoyment, and his race had not been cursed; but, in his passion for changing the face of the country, he had conceived the idea of planting great woods over the land. In pursuit of this idea, he must sweep away the people

[illegible] the name of Fin- [illegible] them so [illegible] with wild [illegible] his [illegible] the heavy. [illegible] past [illegible] who [illegible] mutilated [illegible] Finns. [illegible] the or- [illegible] under [illegible] the hearth- [illegible] —

[illegible] grows. [illegible] [illegible] speak."

[illegible] they. [illegible] the [illegible] murdered [illegible] —

[illegible] fire. [illegible] [illegible] now. [illegible]

[illegible] spirit [illegible] and [illegible] its [illegible] the [illegible] The [illegible]

[illegible] work at once [illegible] He was [illegible] even his [illegible] emotions [illegible] not [illegible] his [illegible] and be [illegible] immedi- [illegible] finally [illegible] sent- [illegible] upon [illegible] Now and then a car- [illegible] is to be [illegible] and never [illegible] was also [illegible] school, an- [illegible] was to be [illegible] away, and the [illegible] and [illegible] from a [illegible] time, gar- [illegible] place took [illegible] hungry- [illegible] at his [illegible] laborers. [illegible] was a sort of [illegible] look- [illegible] up wild [illegible] instructed [illegible] little results the history of the curse,

and the means to be taken to avert its fulfilment. These means were the saving of money, the stinting themselves and their dependents of the necessaries of life, so that treasure might be hoarded, making it impossible that they should ever come to want. The elder was to inherit every thing: the younger was to go abroad and work for his living. This was to prevent all risk of the family property being scattered. The elder, however, a gentle, sickly lad, did not long stand in the way of his brother. The weight of the responsibility broke his heart, and he sought refuge from the curse in another world.

The younger son succeeded to the property at his father's death, and became the first genuine miser of Tobereevil. And so it went on from generation to generation. The curse and gold were handed from father to son, and from uncle to nephew. It was a singular fact that no daughter of the family ever lived to reach womanhood. Meanwhile the accursed plantations had grown up; and the magnificent Woods of Tobereevil spread for miles over the country, and grew thicker and darker, and grander and more mysterious, as the years rolled along, and the curse tightened its hold around the lean throats of the Finistons. The wicked trees grew proudly out of the hearth-places of the vanished homes, no wholesome roots and simples were to be gathered among their shades, but strange and poisonous herbs grew hidden in their depths, nourished by the evil atmosphere of the place. If an old woman were seen rooting in the dark places of Tobereevil Woods, her character was gone, and she was looked upon as unholy, and a person to be shunned. There were stories from old times of people who had been poisoned, and people who had been made mad, by noisome weeds that had been plucked in the heart of the Wicked Woods.

Six generations had passed away, and Simon Finiston was master of Tobereevil. In his youth he had been gentle and almost generous; and a hope had been entertained that the curse was worn out, and that the reign of misery was at an end in the country. The tenants on the estate trembled with delight at the prospect of having a merciful and sympathizing landlord, of seeing the wild places brought to order at last, the decaying mansion restored, the plough furrowing the idle acres, and employment and plenty going hand in hand along the valleys and over the hills; but these hopes proved an empty dream. As soon as he became master of the property, Simon's character underwent a gradual and miserable change. His gentleness degenerated into nervous weakness, his firmness into a dogged obstinacy. The friends who had hoped better things of him then dropped away one by one, and left him to his fate. The unhappy tenants fell back into despair, and the air was thick with their complaints.

And so, at the time of the opening of this story, the curse was still dragging out its evil existence. The heir to the estate of the Finistons was said to be a young lad named Paul Finiston, nephew of Simon, the actual owner, who had always kept him at a distance. The miser was a timid man, and it was said that he had a horror of the prophecy being fulfilled in his own person. He dreaded being murdered by a kinsman of his own. However this may be, young Paul Finiston had never been seen at Tobereevil. His father and mother had paid a visit there once; but they had hurried away speedily, and had never come back.

At this time, when Simon was growing old, the mansion of Tobereevil looked grim and dilapidated. It stood in a slight hollow of the land, with the sombre masses of the woods at its back, and a strong force of loftier trees mustering about it like a guard. The sullen gray walls were bleached and blackened, and rain-soiled and moss-eaten. There were broken panes everywhere, and shutters closed over them to keep out the wind. Weeds and wild plants grew on the pathways, and in the crevices of the steps at the entrance. A solitary cow grazed in the wild field that had once been a velvet-like lawn, and a few starveling hens pecked among the pebbles in the long, rank grass; and in this dreary abode dwelt the man who was lord of Tobereevil, including Monasterlea.

CHAPTER II.

MONASTERLEA.

MONASTERLEA was a green heap of majestic and picturesque ruins, standing in the centre of an ancient graveyard; and there were attached to it some rich abbey lands which made a comfortable farm. It had been built when Christianity was yet very young; it had swarmed with busy monks, and its bell had been heard for miles around calling over the land. It had sent forth blazoned manuscripts to the readers of its day, had fed the poor, and tilled the earth. The sun had blazed upon its jewelled windows, where saints and angels gazed back again

at the sun. Its music had floated towards the hills, and been the melody of paradise to many a wanderer astray upon the night The legend of its ornaments, its mottoes among lilies and cherubs, had been perfect to the eye. Rainbows had streamed through its arches, and the breath of incense had been warm upon its sculptured stones. Its friars had slept and waked, and prayed and toiled; then slept and waked no more; and there were their graves under the carved stone crosses, whose lettering the creeping moss had nigh effaced. The jewelled saints had been carried to other shrines, walled up in trees, or trodden into dust upon the earth. The winds had rent away the hospitable roof, — the fickle winds, which in so many a past winter had set a friendly bass to the chanting of the choir. The sanctuary was but a sheltered field, where the sweet wild-roses would blow out of their season. The tall gray tower was a building-place for rooks, and the clouds peeped through the high hollow arches.

The graves were everywhere, — in the churchyard, where the people of the country still came to leave their dead; among the walls; in the archways; in the doorways. Yet this did not deter Martha Mourne, spinster, from thinking of making a home among the hollows of its walls.

Miss Martha had had troubles of her own. In her youth she had been comely and lovable; and she had seen before her a certain prospect of wedded life, of matronhood, motherhood, and something of fine ladyhood besides; but now? Who could picture old Simon Finiston in the character of a wooer? No one certainly who saw him cowering over a single brand in the winter day in his mouldering mansion, or riding by like a spectre on a spectral horse. Who but Miss Martha herself could remember that he had been once handsome and generous and kind?

Miss Martha had travelled since the days she had known him so. She had been saving the pittance of her fortune, acting as governess to little French children. She was not going to settle down in idleness, and eat up every farthing of her income. How did she know whom she might not have to help before she died? How could any one tell how useful it might be that she should have a little money saved when she was old? Now every one could witness how useful it had been when the money had been saved, and an object for her charity had been found.

It was cause for excitement in the country when she arrived from her foreign exile, and was seen hovering about the lands and the walls of Monasterlea. A patient-looking lady in a brown silk cloak appeared suddenly in the country. She was noticed poking about the ruins with a large umbrella. Peasants passing on the road, or travelling the moors at a distance, saw strange and varied apparitions at this time. One had seen a fairy waving her wand at the ruin, and striving to put an enchantment on the blessed walls; another had seen the ghost of one of the friars; while a third had beheld a vision of a strange brown bird fluttering among the bushes.

Old Simon Finiston must have rejoiced greatly when he received a lawyer's letter offering him a tenant, not alone for the lands, but for the ruin and graveyard of Monasterlea. A heap of waste walls and a wild, useless field full of rugged green mounds and broken crosses! Let the fool who coveted them have them to be sure, provided he paid a heavy rent. Perhaps the miser received a shock when, the bargain being made, he read a legible signature on parchment. His tenant was called Martha Mourne.

But when the workmen began, then indeed there was wonder in the country. Miss Martha chose a corner to the south, — a pleasant little nook, where the sun loved to shine. She roofed in a space, and covered it in with a warm, golden thatch. She had five latticed windows and a white-washed front. She had four odd bedrooms and a quaint sunny parlor. Miss Martha had no fear of the dead. There was a strange gothic doorway in the parlor wall close beside the homely hearth. This led away into a long, dim cloister. The cloisters were rather in the way to be sure, but they could not be got rid of, and were coaxed into service. A piece of one persisted in running right across the dwelling, would not be expelled, and so was obliged to do duty as a passage into the kitchen. Thus right between the kitchen and the parlor sat a grim stone angel with a font in his lap; and old Nanny would aver that there were nights when this angel arose from off his perch and walked about the cloister, scattering holy water to keep evil from the place.

But the little home looked shining and warm with the ivy from the wall, which was its prop and background, trailing in wild wreaths over its amber thatch. A well-stocked flower-garden ran down the slope beside the graves to the river-side. The hedges of sweet briar and acacia flung blossoms over the moss-covered tombstones; and here and there the mutilated crosses leaned a little to one side, and peered through the rifts between the roses.

It was not for the purpose of watching over her ancient lover, of testing the toughness of his miserly heart, or striving to win him from his unnatural ways, that the woman in the brown silk cloak had come poking with her umbrella about the walls of Monasterlea. There was one to be thought of who was an older and a nearer friend. In days long past Martha had spent her childhood by the side of a very dear mother and two brothers in a home, now swept away, which had stood but a mile from Monasterlea. The elder brother had been many years her senior; but they had been happy together, when she was but an infant, and he a big boy. He had been good to her, and his memory clung warm round her heart. The gates of a monastery had closed on him early, and she had seen only glimpses of him during a long, lonely life; but at last there had come to her a message in her exile, praying her to visit and assist him. The message came from the prior of his convent. The old man, Brother Felix, was weakly. He needed to have some care, some comfort, some change; the convent was too poor, the rules too rigid, to allow of such luxuries as these. Would the sister take compassion on the brother of her youth?

"Gladly would I minister to him myself," wrote the prior, who was the aged superior of an aged community, "but I have not a shilling of my own in the world, and there is nothing I could sell of more value than my girdle, which if I were to offer to a peasant he could but use as a spancel for his horse."

But, ah! how the woman clasped her hands over the letter, and how the tears of joy coursed down her face! Blessed now be God, who had inspired her to lay by her poor savings! Adieu very fast to the little French children, who were all grown up and quite ready to forget the old governess. Ah, Felix, the rogue, he could not do without her! Strong as he was, he wanted her to lean upon. Felix had protected her, a child; but now it was he who was to be the child, and she, Martha, the protectress.

So the friars in the convent had a visit from Miss Mourne. She came in on tiptoe, with a bloom of delight under her weary eyes. She saw a little withered old man in a coarse brown gown, tied with a rough white cord. His face was wasted to the size of a child's, and his features were not those which Miss Martha had known; but the countenance was meek and benign, and a placid light seemed to shine from it.

"Ah, little Martha!" he said, in answer to her broken words. "She was a dear little girl. Have you met her lately, madam? I should like to see her again before I die."

The tears dripped down Miss Martha's face.

"I am Martha," she said with a smile. "I am now grown old; but it is little Martha's heart which is beating here still." And she pressed his withered hand to the brown silk cloak.

"You, Martha?" he said, and gazed wistfully in her face. "Nay, do not cry; forgive me, dear. I am older, a long way, than you. I am grown very old and feeble; but it is so much the better for both you and me. Eternal youth is drawing near."

Reluctant, but obedient, the old man turned his back upon his convent, the prior, more aged still, kneeling to ask his blessing on the threshold; and Miss Martha carried him away to the home she had prepared for his reception.

It had been worthy of her love, that thought of making him a nest in the old monastery. It was a spot that had been familiar to his childhood, and as a boy he had delighted to dream among the ruins. His dreams in the place had been to him what poems and fairy tales are to other wonder-loving children. He had lain in the long grass among the graves, and peopled the walls with his fancy. In spirit he had swung the censer, and rung the peal of bells from the belfry. Time had been when his mother, missing him long from home, had found him rapt in prayer among the tombs. A long life had passed over his head since then, of fasting and doing penance, of praying and contemplating, of much labor and little rest; and now he had come back here to die. Broken and spent and feeble, but infinitely happy and at peace, the old man had found a home for his last days in the very haunts of his boyhood's dreams.

But at the opening of this story the establishment of the home among the ruins was a thing of old date, and a child was growing up at Monasterlea.

CHAPTER III.

LITTLE MAY.

LITTLE MAY MOURNE made her humble entry into life in the sunshine of a Roman summer. Her father had been a painter, younger brother of Martha and Felix, one

of those who give up home, country, and friends to follow art whither she may lead them. She had led him into care and difficulty, had given him hard tasks to do, and bitter bread to eat. He had had too much love, and too little power; and disappointment had broken his heart in the end. May's mother had been a beautiful Roman girl, who had not lived long after the death of her husband; and the child had disported herself in an Italian vineyard until she was five years old, when the friends of her mother, who were poor people, yielding to the yearning of Miss Martha, allowed her to come to Rome, and take the girl away with her. Miss Martha had left her home in the ruins, her fireside among the tombs, had left old Nanny taking care of Father Felix, and had journeyed to Rome; and returned in triumph with the child; who, with her soft dark eyes and picturesque ways, had become a part of this curious household. It was like ingrafting a crimson rose on a wild thorn, to bring little May to Monasterlea.

Miss Martha brought home various other treasures besides the one whose tiny hand was squeezed in hers. She brought a quaint silver lamp, and a picture painted by May's father, both for the little chapel which she had made for Father Felix; for she had roofed in a space off one of the cloisters, and set up an altar, and ornamented the walls. It might have been formerly a chapter-room, or a refectory, or a scriptorium. Now it was a chapel, which May could dress with flowers, and where Felix could pray the day long if he pleased, and the night long too. Miss Martha had not counted upon this when out of sympathy she humored him so far; but he would leave his bed, which she had spread so soft, and would pass whole nights upon the stones.

No wonder that such things should be talked about in the country. Father Felix had been received with much welcome by the people. They loved him as a Franciscan friar; for these friars have always been friends of the Irish poor; but they loved him, also, for his simple face and gentle, sympathetic ways. Now, added to this, was the fame of his sanctity, which went forth in whispers among the hills. It was said he could restore the sick by the great strength and faith of his prayers. The poor had no other doctor, and they ran to bring their sick to him. He prayed beside them; long wrestling prayers, which left him utterly exhausted. The sick went away declaring themselves healed, and the old man was carried fainting to his bed.

He was looked upon as the saint of the country: his fastings, vigils, and communions with heaven, were talked of at mountain firesides. If people caught a glimpse of his white head moving among the ruined walls, up and down between the rose hedges, they went forward on their journey with a lighter heart. The mountain world was the gladder and brighter on account of his coming; and Father Felix had become a part of the poetry of the district.

Monasterlea was a very strange home for a child. The stories of the ghosts that walked abroad from twilight in the evening till sunrise in the morning, would have made any ordinary mortal feel uncomfortable. But the inhabitants of this house were not like other people. Miss Martha had no objection to ghosts. They did not harm her, and she was such a hospitable soul, that she was glad to give a shelter to any thing, natural or supernatural, that chose to seek a harbor under her roof. She rather liked to think, as she lay in her bed, that her snug fireside, where the warm red ashes glowed all the night through, was a comfort and a refuge for wandering spirits, who, before she lit her hearth upon the spot, must have had a chill, damp time of it during their inevitable vigils.

Then there was old Nanny, to whom ghosts were a delight. She knew more of them than she would like to tell; it was not given to many to see and hear the things that she had seen and heard. She could give form and significance to every shadow on the wall, and could interpret every murmur of the wind. She knew what went on when other folks were asleep; knew, but dared not tell. If she did not keep their counsel, they would drag her from her bed, and carry her through the mountains; she should be dashed against every rock, and dipped in every stream, besides being whirled through the air the whole of the night. So, though the ghosts might come trooping down the cloisters in the darkness, raising their voices, and making a tempest in the corners; though they might meet her face to face in the passages, dash the things about the kitchen, and bend over her, and talk to her in her bed, yet of all this and more she dared not tell. She would certainly keep their secrets from light-hearted Bridget, her fellow-servant, who was so laughter-loving that she could laugh even at the ghosts of Monasterlea; whose red cheeks would dimple, and black eyes glitter, to hear the very mention of their freaks; and whose delight it was to come rushing into the kitchen of a dark evening, panting and laughing, and declaring that the

great stone angel had risen up and kissed her, or that a terrible apparition had accosted her in the cloisters, and invited her out for a walk.

In the midst of the various influences of the place, the little flower from Italy grew hardily and freshly in the moorland soil. It was a curious occurrence which first drew her towards her visionary uncle.

The child had feared him; his looks struck her with awe; she shrank from him, and dreaded to pass the door of his room. Nevertheless, she fretted about him; wakened in the night, and wept to think of him prostrate on the cold flags upon the chapel floor. She mourned to see him touch no food, and hid little cakes in his pocket, hoping that he might find and eat them.

One night, at last, she got up in her sleep, and made her way through the long, dark cloister of the chapel. There was no light within but the glimmer of the sanctuary lamp; and the old man believed that he saw a white-robed angel approaching to comfort and bear him company. His cry of surprise awakened the child, who, looking wildly around her, shuddered a few moments, and then fled to him, clinging round his neck in her fear.

The old friar soothed her kindly, and gathered from her sobbing account that anxiety and sympathy for him had caused her to wander in her sleep. He carried her in his arms to her chamber door. Next morning she flew to meet him with smiles, and the blooming little maiden and the aged ascetic became the fastest of simple-hearted friends.

And thus out of its many odd elements, Miss Martha's household contrived to make a cheerful and harmonious whole. As for her, she had her farm to attend to, and her house and her servants, besides her two children, Felix and May. She was a very happy woman, who felt herself a power for the protection of the weak. She had known what it was to lead a lonely life; but now she was in right good company.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CAMLOUGH PEOPLE.

Sir John and Lady Archbold, who lived at Camlough in the hills, had an only daughter, about a year older than May. They loved this child better than their own souls and bodies, and as much as they hated the thought of death, which is saying a good deal. The fame of the beauty and spirit of the girl had travelled to Monasterlea; and many a time May had stood on tip-toe looking over the hedges to see her riding past by her father's side, with her yellow hair streaming on the wind.

The little girl at Camlough was one of May's dream-playmates. She had many such companions, who shared all her confidences, and joined in her games. Another was the grim stone angel of the passage, who was petted and talked to in the daylight, but rather shunned when the night began to come on. The girl from Camlough was May's especial friend. This little person was always supposed to be at hand, and her opinion was taken on all subjects. So fond of her was May, that she would sit for hours upon the highest step of the belfry-stairs, gazing through a hole in the ruined wall across the land towards Camlough. There, behind the Golden Mountain, she was told there stood a castle of delights, of which her friend was princess. Wonderful travelling carriages would appear upon the lonesome road, on their way to this palace of enchantment. May had once been at the inn at the foot of the mountain, where Sir John's huge oxen were kept in waiting for his guests; had seen the horses taken out and the oxen yoked to, and the fine ladies screaming a little, when the oxen began to pull and the carriages began moving up the fine paved road cut in the steep mountain's face. From her belfry she could trace the movement of the oxen on that distant road, could watch them to the very rim of the crown of the mountain, see them quiver there for a moment against the sun, then drop out of her sight into unknown realms of bliss.

But the little girl at Camlough fell sick. The palace of delights was a saddened palace. The echo of the anguish of those parents who knew not how to suffer was heard over the moors and through the hills. The child was sick to death; rallied, fell back, wasted, and grew weaker, and at last was given over as incurable. Doctors took their way from Camlough. It was said that Lady Archbold quarrelled with the last who lingered, and would have waited a little longer; that she ordered him from the place because he would not tell her that her child should surely live. Then the frantic parents gave way in despair.

One hot, dark night, Midsummer Eve, Katherine Archbold lay in a trance like

death. Her father was sitting by her bed. Her mother walked about the room close by, mad with the throes of agony. The short darkness of the warm, summer night hung heavily on this dwelling of luxury. The silver lamps burned softly, and the odor of flowers came through the open windows. The servants were ordered to sleep, knowing that, at any moment, death might arrive; and after that they knew not what to expect, for her ladyship was determined that her child should not die.

There was a poor fool sitting down in the kitchen, muttering to himself as idiots do, and no one was minding him. He was an "innocent" from birth, one of those who "live among the people." He wandered from place to place, and was welcome everywhere; for people say such as he bring luck. The cook had placed meat and bread before him; but the fool had heard rumors of the trouble that was in the place, and he would not eat as usual. Not that he cared much for the young lady herself, for she had often tormented him: not that he cared much for Lady Archbold, who seldom bestowed notice on such as he; but his heart was sore for Sir John. Sir John always threw him a shilling when he passed him, and sent him to the cook to get his dinner; and he nodded to him and smiled at him, and Con the idiot knew a smile from a frown.

Two or three servants were talking of the deadliness of the child's disease, of the uselessness of doctors, of the grief of the father and mother, and of fifty things besides. All at once Con started from his seat, and sped to the kitchen-door.

"Hallo, my boy!" cried the cook, "you stay here for the night!"

But Con only flung a grin of delight over his shoulder, and disappeared; not out of doors, but, to the dismay of all present, up stairs, where he had no business to be.

Sir John, sitting by the side of his daughter, with his face buried in his hands, felt a touch upon his shoulder, and looked up with a great start. There were Con's white face and black eyes gleaming at him in the dull light of the sick room,

"Master!" said the idiot caressingly.

Sir John was about to shake him off; but the great tenderness and sympathy in the lad's face caught his attention.

"Master, take miss down mountain!" said the fool in an excited whisper; and he pointed with his finger to the open window, beyond which the day was already breaking, leaving the dark peaks of the hills all naked against the pale rifts between the clouds.

"Father Felix, master! Father Felix, master!"

Sir John started again, and a flush rose to his face. He guessed on the instant at the meaning of the fool. Every one in the country knew that the sick were brought to Father Felix. Many a time Sir John had laughed at the folly; yesterday he would have laughed at it: but now, being in despair, he felt differently.

Within the next half-hour, the whole castle was astir; and all the people of the place knew that a strange thing was about to happen. Lady Archbold, docile for once, hurried on with quivering hands her riding-habit, and placed a hat with long feathers and jewelled buckle above her troubled face. A litter was constructed, and the insensible maiden was placed on it, supported by pillows, and swathed in costly wrappings. A heap of June flowers lay on her feet. Six stout retainers carried the litter on their shoulders, and the woful parents rode a little in advance on either side. A crowd of servants, laborers, tradespeople, and tenants, who poured out at short notice from the settlement of Camlough in the lap of the Golden Mountain, made a motley rear-guard to the train. Down the rugged passage of the steep mountain came winding slowly this mournful procession, with the glory of the midsummer morning flashing on the rich draperies of the litter, the pale adorned figure of the prostrate child, and the awed, wondering faces around her; and far on before them fled the swift-footed fool, the herald and vanguard of the train, with his arms extended as a signal of alarm, and all the fires of the sunrise burning in his eyes.

Early that morning little May had climbed the belfry to send the wishes of her heart to her sick dream-playmate. With two level hands above her eyebrows she had screamed aloud, so sharply that the crows started cawing out of the ivy.

"Aunt Martha," she cried, flying into the breakfast parlor, "there is a strange, slow, procession coming down the Golden Mountain!"

"Guests returning," said Miss Martha comfortably, speaking from behind the steam of her teapot.

"There are no visitors at Camlough this long, long time," said May, who was as pale as the white rose in the garden.

"That is true," said Miss Martha doubtfully; "but what are you afraid of?"

"I fear that it may be the little girl's funeral," said May, and burst into tears.

"Impossible!" said Miss Martha: "we should have heard of her death."

"Do not cry, little one," said Father Felix. "It is no doubt an ordinary funeral from the hills;" and he stole away to his chapel to pray for the rest of some unknown soul.

"Now you take the telescope, May," said her aunt, "and amuse yourself watching these travellers; and don't you fret youself for nothing, my dear. As for me, I have to boil my preserves."

Funerals were familiar events to Miss Martha.

"But there are bright things shining in the riders' hands, and a bier with a cover as white as snow," muttered May in her belfry, telescope in hand. And then about noon she beheld wild Con coming flying along the road to Monasterlea.

"News, Con? News from Camlough?" cried May, speeding to meet him, and clapping her hands to attract his notice; but he dashed past her without heeding, leaped over the gravestones like a goat, dived into the cloisters through a breach in the wall, nor paused till he burst into the chapel.

The old priest had been kneeling in prayer before his altar, but rose in dismay at the rude noise. Wild Con dropped prostrate at his feet.

"Master bring miss down hill," cried the fool. "Father Felix make her laugh and walk about. Aha! little missy get up quite well."

Father Felix patted him soothingly on the head. The idiot was quivering with excitement. He began to laugh and cry as the sound of many feet and voices became audible through the window; but the priest signed to him to be still and reverent, and he crouched upon the ground, covering his face with his hands.

The door opened again, and May came radiantly into the chapel, stepping on tip-toe, and looking like a spirit.

"Uncle!" she whispered, clasping his hands, "Sir John and Lady Archbold have come all the way from Camlough with their daughter, who is sick. You will cure her, uncle? Oh! you will make her well?"

The old man changed color, and trembled.

"My child," he said, "you know not what you say; but I will go and learn what they ask of me."

The procession had poured itself into the graveyard. The litter had been placed upon a fallen tombstone, the white coverlet swept the earth, and the flowers and draperies glowed with new color in the brilliant air. A tawny-cheeked woman in a scarlet shawl held a canopy of white silk over the sick girl's wan face, and over the loose golden hair, which lay in a shower among the nettles. Sir John had alighted, and, with hat in hand, advanced to meet the monk. Lady Archbold sat haughtily on her horse.

"Good sir," said Sir John, "our daughter is sick. All natural aid has failed to cure her. We come to you, begging you will restore her. We have brought you gifts, — the most precious things we could select on the instant; but they are a small part of what we are prepared to give you."

The old man glanced all around, and the pomp and pride of the scene troubled him. As he stood there, with the eyes of these great people upon him, he looked, to worldly view, a meagre figure, both as to flesh and garb, yet with a certain dignity of age and holiness which could not be questioned, still less understood. Sir John grew impatient at a moment's delay.

"Sir," he said, "we are in anguish. Is it not your calling to succor the distressed?"

"Alas," said the old man, "take away your gifts. God alone can do what you desire. I can pray in your name; but he looks to the humility of the heart."

Lady Archbold now pressed forward.

"Sir!" she cried wildly. "Exert your power, — we care not much if it be of heaven or not. We only want our child! Oh, me, we only want our child!" and she broke out into a wail of despair.

"Lady," said the old man, looking at her with mild pity, "you speak to me as if I were a sorcerer. I am no such thing; neither am I a saint, only the poorest of God's servants. And I hesitate, fearing no mercy will be shown which is demanded in such a spirit."

Lady Archbold's face sank beneath his glance. She flung herself from her horse, and went down on her knees till the feathers of her hat touched the earth.

"Oh!" she moaned, "tell me how to feel, that this be done. You shall put ashes on my head, and I will be the humblest poor woman in these mountains. I have lived without religion, but I will try to be a Christian henceforward. Only ask your God to give me back my child!"

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"I wept this morning," said May, who was ready to weep again. "I wept because you were so sick."

"How funny!" said Katherine, laughing. "I'm sure I should not weep if you were sick; but I like you very well, and you shall come to Camlough. You are a nice little girl in your own way; but you are not so beautiful as I am."

"Oh, no!" said May eagerly, "I could not be so silly as to think so."

"You are a *very* pleasant little girl," said Katherine: "I shall certainly have you with me at Camlough."

Before Sir John and Lady Archbold left Monasterlea, they stood by the old priest's bedside, to offer him their thanks. At her husband's suggestion, Lady Archbold ex-

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pressed her sorrow for wild words which had been uttered in her grief.

The old man was ill, and could not speak much. "Forget all that," he said; "but there is one thing I would bid you remember. Guard well this soul that God has given back into your keeping. See that in gaining her you have not lost her. Make her modest and holy, gentle and wise."

But Lady Archbold's pride was on the return. She thought herself lectured, and turned away with impatience, which she hardly took the trouble to conceal. At the same moment Katherine was led unwillingly into the room, glancing about the place with an air of scorn. The pallid old man upon the couch was an object of ridicule in her eyes. When her father placed her beneath the hand which was extended to bless her she drew back in disgust. And then they all departed, and the train went back to Camlough.

And May hid herself in her belfry to weep. This was her first real grief. Katherine had disappointed her. The sweet dream-playmate was no more. Pride shown to herself she did not mind; but contempt of her uncle the loving heart could not brook.

And, after all this, Miss Martha's anxious words came true; for in two days Father Felix was dead.

CHAPTER V.

THE HEIR TO THE WOODS.

Paul Finiston and his mother had, for many years, lived in a high, narrow house on the Quays, in Dublin, close by where a light bridge springs over the dark, running river. Tall spars congregated beside it, and old brown sails flapped heavily in the water, turning orange and red in the sun. High above, there were domes against the sky, and in the shadow of the up-hill distance loomed the ghostly outlines of many peaks and pinnacles.

Mrs. Finiston was a frail creature, who was chained to a sofa in her dingy room. For years she had had nothing strong to protect her but her trust in God, nothing bright to look at but the face of her boy. Yet with these two comforts she had managed to get on pretty well, and now her son was turning into a tall, brave lad. Only let her live for a few years more, and she might free him forever from the dangers that beset him.

She had saved her husband from the curse of his family, and she would also try to save her son. Her husband had been the brother of Simon the miser. He had obtained with difficulty a commission in the army, and had been sent into the world to seek his fortune. It had been her labor to keep him from longing after ill-omened possessions. She was tender, upright, and somewhat superstitious, and the curse of Tobereevil had been the terror of her life. The dread of it had made her patient in poverty, and peculiarly unselfish in her love; and her patience and love had so influenced her husband that he had never shown a desire to touch the rusting treasures of his race. Husband and wife had paid one visit together to Tobereevil, and had hastened away, shuddering at the wretchedness they had witnessed. But now he had been dead many years.

Mrs. Finiston was in receipt of a small pension, and possessed also a trifling annuity of her own. But all this little income would vanish when she died. No wonder, then, that she prayed to be spared; that she stinted and saved with the hope of being enabled to give her son a profession. She had determined against making him a soldier; as such he would be always poor; and in poverty, there was that danger of the longing for the riches of the misers of Tobereevil. She would hedge round his future from that risk.

Her high sitting-room window was bowed out towards the river, and the narrow panes between its ancient pilasters afforded a view over the bridge into the sunshine. The dome of the Four Courts shone finely in the distance above the masts, through the soft amber haze of a summer's day. She had resolved that, under its shelter, her Paul should yet win fame and gold, — honorable fame, which he would prefer to wealth; gold, honestly earned, which he would generously share and spend. There were many great men even in her own little day who had grown up out of smaller beginnings. The mother on the sofa recalled a dozen such.

With a view to all this she had deprived herself of comfort that he might be taught by the best tutors in Dublin. He was now seventeen, a student of Trinity, and had taken a fair share of honors for his time. He was not a genius, nor over-fond of books; but he loved his mother, and appreciated the sacrifices she was making for his sake. And, though he smiled a little at her anxiety about the curse, his horror of it was even greater than her own.

Thus Paul Finiston, sitting among his books in the rude old window, would often also raise his eyes and hopes to that dome of promise against the clouds. He would stille in his heart certain yearnings for an open-air life: for travel, for change, for the ownership of country acres, and the power of mastership in a dominion of his own. He would determine within him to let no weakness of purpose throw him in the way of temptation. He would become a learned hard-headed man of business, who should found a new house to redeem the honor of his name: and above all should have no leisure for bad dreams.

"Paul," said his mother one evening, as he came in and settled down to his books. "I have had a letter from the west."

"From the west!" echoed Paul, startled, thinking of the miser.

"From dear old Martha Mourne. She is coming to Dublin on business with her lawyer: and she says, 'I will bring poor Timothy's child to see you.'"

"Who is poor Timothy's child?" asked Paul. "Her niece? I hope she is not grown up." For he was very shy of women, having been accustomed to speak to none but his mother.

"She is a child of about twelve years old, if I remember. And you must be kind to her, Paul. You must meet them at the coach, and bring them here."

Paul pulled a face over his book, a sign of dismay which he would not have shown his mother for the world. He tried to be glad that she should see a friend; but, for himself, he had a dread of old women and children. Still he would be kind to them, and civil to them, if he could. He would meet them at the coach-office, of course, and carry all their band-boxes, if need be. He would pour out the tea as he was accustomed to do, and help little missy and old madam to cake. But after all these things were resolved upon, it could surely never hurt any one that he should kick his old boots about his own little room, and wish the good people safely back where they came from.

At four o'clock next day the coach came in. It was a long, rose-colored evening towards the spring, full of soft promises of sweet months yet to come; bars of red fell across the bridge, and spikes of burnished gold tipped the clustering spars, while masses of light and shade rolled up and down the shifting shrouds, gambolling like living things.

Paul had laid the cloth, and brought the fat roast chicken and the slices of cold ham from the nearest cook's shop; had set forth the fresh lemon-cakes and the strawberry preserves. The tea was in the teapot, and the kettle on the hob. He had placed the muffins at a prudent distance from the fire, where his mother on her sofa could turn them at her leisure; and, all these formidable arrangements made, he sauntered slowly down the quay with his hands in his pockets. He gazed with new interest at the movements of the men in the boats, spoke to them from the wall, and was pleased when they invited him on board; but the very last moment of lingering arrived, and Paul was at his post when the coach drove up.

He scanned the faces inside, and recognized his charge with a thrill of relief. They did not appear awful after all; and they looked very tired, and very glad of him at the door. This no doubt made Paul look also glad to see them, and the introduction was quite pleasant and friendly. There was nothing to object to about Miss Martha, except that her bonnet was a little bruised on one side; but that was from falling asleep against the side of the coach. She looked thoroughly a lady in her neat garments of lavender and black; and her quick-witted ways seemed to announce that she was accustomed to be no inconvenience to any one. Beside her sat a slim little maiden, in a gray pelisse and a deep straw bonnet tied down with white, who was cherishing fondly a basket of roses, which had faded, in her lap. And, when the bonnet turned round, there were discovered under it cheeks flushed with fatigue, and bright eager eyes,—a sweet little bloomy carnation of a face.

The travellers, upon their part, saw a strong, graceful, good-looking lad. The face was as good a face as ever woman looked upon. The features were manly, the eyes dark and steady under finely marked brows. They were sweet-tempered eyes, yet suggestive of passion. The forehead was broad; and the temples too full for any man but a poet. The half-curled locks were thick and fair, and the mouth looked particularly truthful. It was not a very firm mouth, and yet not weak; truthful-looking and changeful, and very apt to smile; and it smiled broadly as Paul Finiston handed young missy and old madam out of the coach.

As for parcels, Miss Martha had only two small bags and a large umbrella; and it was as much as Paul could do to get leave to carry the latter.

"No, my dear," she said, "though I like you for offering. It is a good sign to see a lad polite to old women; but I'd rather

you'd take hands with little May to keep her steady on the crossings."

So Paul marched forward with May under one arm and the umbrella under the other; and Miss Martha followed with a bag in each hand. And, in spite of his dread of old women and children, Paul forgot to be uneasy lest any of the Trinity fellows should happen to stroll down the street at the wrong minute, and behold this procession crossing the bridge.

CHAPTER VI.

MISS MARTHA MAKES A PROMISE.

Now May had suddenly stepped from dreamland into a world of reality and bustle. What business could have brought so many people together? Who could have built so many houses? and how did each person know his own? The best novelty of all, and the one which she had most leisure to examine, was the great, tall boy who had untied her bonnet-strings, and who was looking at her and talking to her, as if she had been some one of importance — a grown person at least — instead of being only little May from Monasterlea. In a world where such people as this were to be found there was no knowing what one might expect. Since the shock of her disappointment in Katherine from Camlough, her imagination had been empty of an idol. Her heroine had vanished; and now, behold a hero! May, with a well-piled plate before her, folded her little hands under the table, and sighed, — a sigh of ineffable joy, whose flavor was so high as almost to take away her appetite.

Paul found May a most unusual little person. He wondered if it was her age that made her so pleasant to him. She was not at all grown up, and yet was far from being a baby. He had never known a girl of this age before. It seemed to him that he had never even passed one in the streets. All the rest whom he had seen were either grown-up women or children; but this one was child enough to be petted and treated without ceremony, yet woman enough to be a desirable companion. Her laugh was so pleasant, and she was not afraid to talk, and she had such very lovely, purple-colored eyes!

Mrs. Finiston said, "And this is the little Italian!" kissed May, held her off, and looked at her, and kissed her very heartily again; but after this she had no eyes nor ears for any one save Martha. It was on Martha that her eyes had longed to rest. She had wished for, and been almost hopeless of, this visit. She had much to say to this friend. She could not set out for the other world without first opening her heart to her. She might have written to Martha, was in the habit of writing to her: she told her punctually that Paul was an inch taller, and butter was very dear; but a gnawing anxiety was stored up in that heart which so protested that it must rid itself of a burden. She had waited and waited, hoping for this chance visit. It is so much easier for a woman to explain herself to a friend, while looking in the eyes or holding the hand, than to put a plain statement upon paper.

"Paul," said the mother, "will you take the little girl to see the shops? They will still be open for an hour."

She spoke pleadingly, and turned to urge her petition by a look; but Paul was already tying on May's bonnet.

"Oh, I hope they will not be shut!" said the little girl earnestly; "I have so many things to buy, — beads for Nanny, and ribbons for Bridget, and a cap with strings for Con the fool. He loses all his hats and gets pains in his ears."

"If the shops be shut," said Paul, "why we shall only have to break in the doors."

"But I should not like you to get into trouble on my account," said May, as they swept down the stairs at a flying pace. She was divided between her admiration of Paul's prowess and her fears for his safety. "I'd much rather not make any disturbance," said she.

"We shall see," said Paul mischievously.

The shops were found to be open. Never was there such an expedition of wonder and excitement. Paul led his enchanted companion first into a large boot and shoe shop, and asked for woollen caps with strings for protecting the ears of fools. He next introduced her to a millinery establishment, festooned with bonnets and head-dresses, feathers and flowers, satins and tinsels, the like of which May could not have imagined. And hear Paul politely asked for rosary beads "fit for the pious use of old women in the country." May thought it very odd that it should be so difficult to get the things she wanted. After this they went to a picture-shop for cap-ribbons, and to a jeweller's for sugar-stick. In the end, however, and after much perseverance, they succeeded in getting all they had been seeking for, — and something more besides; for Paul, happening to have,

by accident, the price of a pair of new boots in his pocket, recklessly expended half of it on a cross for May. It was handsomely carved, and hung round her neck by a pretty black chain. May was so absorbed and transfixed by gratitude and surprise, that he had almost to carry her over the next two crossings to save her from being run down by the jingles. And as his mind was rather uneasy about the money, he soothed his conscience by laying out the other half on a present for his mother. He resolved to wear his boots for another half-year. He would send them to the cobbler, and entreat the sullen servant at home to give them a little extra blacking every morning for the future; and if all that did not make things right, why then the disagreeable future must take care of itself.

Meantime the two friends in the high room had been occupied in dividing the mother's trouble, share and share alike, between two faithful hearts.

It was nothing very new that Miss Martha had to hear; only the old, old story, with the slight variation of Mrs. Finiston's fears about her boy. The little bit of novelty being a vivid expectation of her own approaching death.

"I know you won't laugh at me. Martha," she said, "though, of course, I do not insist that this may not be a fancy; but you know I have been tolerably brave all my life. For a sick, lonely woman I have had very few whims; but now I believe that I am soon going to die."

Miss Martha cleared her throat twice before her voice was ready to answer.

"Of course I am not going to laugh at you, Elizabeth. It may, as you say, be a fancy. Very likely. But then, as we have all got to die, it may happen to come true; and you would like to arrange for it, just as if it were going to come true. I approve of that. Be ready for a thing, and it is nothing when it comes. If this appears coming, send for me without the delay of an instant; and I have no doubt at all that we shall help each other. There, now, we have faced it; and that being over, let me remind you that I am older than you, and shall probably die first."

Mrs. Finiston choked back a little flutter of the heart. "I could wish to live," she said, "and I will send for you if there is time. In the mean time, I like to have things settled. There is Paul! Suppose I left him now, he has not a penny nor a friend in the world."

"He is the heir of Tobereevil," said Miss Martha boldly.

"Martha!" almost shrieked Mrs. Finiston, letting her friend's hand drop in dismay.

"Now, Elizabeth, be quiet. There has been a great deal of nonsense talked about that curse; and I believe that it has worked all the harm. If Simon Finiston had not known that he was cursed he would probably never have been the miser that he is. Weak-minded people will submit to fate. The fascination of being marked out, and prophesied over, is strong for little souls. They like the eccentricity, and fall in with it, and pander to their morbid expectations. Simon Finiston had as good a chance as any man in the world; and his ruin is upon his own head."

Mrs. Finiston was aghast at this speech. She was so utterly surprised, that, for a moment, she forgot her own troubles. Never before had Martha Mourne been heard to condemn Simon Finiston; but the explanation of this outburst was plain, though poor Mrs. Finiston was too pre-occupied to see it at the time. Miss Martha had a fine little morsel of sublimity at the bottom of her simple heart. It may be that, at this moment, the memory of Simon Finiston, as he had been once, was dearer to her than the reality of young Paul in his present state of youthful undevelopment; but Miss Martha saw the drift of her friend's fears, and her handful of dried sentiment was cast out of the way like a sheaf of old lavender from a drawer. The future of a young man, she acknowledged, was more precious than an old man's past.

The shock of this surprise over, Mrs. Finiston returned to her own affairs.

"But, Martha, Martha! what happens to one man may happen to another."

"I see no fears for your lad," said Miss Martha. "Unlike his uncle, he has grown up quite apart from the dangerous influence. He knows the evil; yet he has no morbid dread of it, and I see in his eye that he is no shallow soul. My friend, you must commit him to God and to me. If you go first, I will try to be Elizabeth. I am not a mother; but it may be that it is in me to act a motherly part."

Mrs. Finiston sobbed, and squeezed the spinster's fingers.

"Well, let us see. He will one day be called upon to accept the inheritance of Tobereevil. Do as we will, the future will place him in that position. You have prepared him well to receive such a trying stewardship. He will be close to us who are his friends. He will bring a generous ardor to the righting of what is wrong. And you know I am not so credulous as some; and I hold that when a person is

striving to do his best, the Lord is very likely to step in and help him."

"It is true," said Mrs. Finiston, with many more sobs. "I have sometimes had dreams like this; but the bitterness of my fears always frightened them away."

"And as I have found you so credulous of prophecies," went on Miss Martha, with increased liveliness of manner, "I will venture to foretell something which the least superstitious may expect to come to pass. One Paul Finiston brought evil into the country. Another Paul shall cast it out. We shall see your boy break this ugly spell upon his race, and begin a reign of peace among our hills!"

Miss Martha wound up this little period with a most unusual note in her matter-of-fact voice; and Mrs. Finiston, carried away by the eloquence of her friend, flung her arms round her neck, and wept all the remnant of the tears she had to weep. But in the course of a few minutes this scene was interrupted by the young people bursting in at the door, May flourishing invisible purchases over her head, and calling upon every one to admire them in the dark.

"And, oh, such hunting as we have had!" she exclaimed. "We were in at least ten shops before we could get any thing we wanted; and it was so much better fun than if we had got every thing at first. And please, Aunt Martha, do come close to the window, and see what a beautiful present he has bought me!"

The entrance of a lamp here revealed Paul's face, which broadly reflected the girl's delight. The mother, who knew the secret of the broken shoes, and the friend who did not, exchanged meaning glances. They said to one another without words: —

"This lad is not likely to become a churl or a miser!"

As Miss Martha was going out to her lawyer's next day, Mrs. Finiston put her a question which it may be thought she might have put to her before.

"And now that I have time to think of it, Martha, what is this business that has brought you up to town?"

The answer was hard to give; but Miss Martha was honest, and it came out bluntly.

"My landlord thinks of raising my rent," she said, showing some confusion of manner; "and," — here she was looking over the table for the gloves which were on her hands, — "I do not feel justified in complying with his demand."

Mrs. Finiston knew well who the landlord was. Truly old Simon's disease was progressing.

CHAPTER VII.

TRYING TO BE ELIZABETH.

Miss Martha was right and wrong when she persuaded Paul's mother that her fears of approaching death were unfounded. Three years passed away, and Mrs. Finiston still lived, still languished on her sofa, and paid her son's college fees, and wrote letters to her friend at Monasterlea. But one morning, while Miss Bourne bustled briskly about her breakfast-room, she got the news that Mrs. Finiston was no longer in the world. The end had been quick: there had been scarcely any warning, and little time for reluctance and regret.

Then Miss Martha, reading her letter with red eyes, had reason to remember that she had said, "I will try to be Elizabeth."

She would have remembered it in any case; but the special reason which suggested it came in the form of a message from the dead. It was simply, "Go to Simon," scrawled feebly upon a morsel of paper. The dying hand had been unable to write more.

Well, Miss Martha would go to Simon. She knew all that would have been added to those few eager words had there been time. She would go to Simon.

Martha Mourne was not romantic. Even in her youth, she had been remarkable for nothing so much as common sense. The experience of a long life had done its utmost to make her the most matter-of-fact person in the world; and yet there was something within her that made it difficult that she should go to see Simon of Tobereevil, — so difficult that Miss Martha would rather have marched into a battle-field in her neat, bright goloshes and best black silk, and taken the few odd chances for her life. It was twenty years since she had seen Simon Finiston; and, on the occasion of that last meeting, she had broken off an engagement which had then already lasted nearly a quarter of a lifetime. She had sought him as she was going to seek him now; had spoken to him, and left him before his own door-step. She was not going to have the blood of the poor upon her head, and their hungry-cry in her ears all her life. If he would persist in walking evil ways, why, then, she must let him walk them alone. She had waited and hoped till suspense had gnawed the pith out of her heart; now she was going away to mend her wounds, and to fit herself for a life of wholesome labor elsewhere. It was in this way that she had talked to him, and left

him; and he had walked his evil ways quite alone ever since. It had pleased her later to come back in her independence, and settle for old age within a mile of Tobereevil; but it did not please her to confront this old man, who could remind her that certain five years of her life had been full of a light which had failed her, and that other ten years had been racked with the worst grief that can be suffered, — the ill-doing and disgrace of one entirely beloved. To save herself from death, she would not have entered in at that rusty gate, and travelled up that dismal avenue; but she knew very well what she had meant when she had said, "I will try to be Elizabeth."

The unkind March wind was making a jest of her all the time, plucking at her gown, and puffing in her face, and singing out a loud, shrill song at her expense, that made the tender buds shiver on the trees. It was as hard upon her as would have been any other raw, blustering thing that prided itself on youth, and had no pity upon the romance of a weather-beaten heart. Miss Martha often paused to consider her way; for the trees and the weeds seemed to have eaten up the landmarks which she had known. There were no longer any traces of the long carriage-drive. The branches of the trees hung across the path, and the rabbits scampered past her feet. Here and there a rusted gate barred her way, while a broken-down fence reluctantly allowed her to proceed; and, as she made her way resolutely past all obstacles, there were other things besides the cruel east wind that plucked at her sorely. She remembered how many and many a time she had been used to trip up and down that avenue. She saw the moss-covered trunk on which she had liked to stand to get a favorite view down at an arch of the trees, thinking pleasantly all the time of what things she and Simon would do when they should become owners of Tobereevil. They would prune and weed, and till and plant, until the wilderness should be changed into a paradise. They would make the mountains glad, and restore the tarnished honor of the Finistons. Then the desolation of Tobereevil had possessed a charm for her, as the haunt of an evil genius which was to be banished one day by the force of her strong good-will. Then the mansion itself, — the mansion which was just now showing a cold, gray shoulder between the trees, had been as the castle of an ogre, which was to be changed into a home of all blessedness and happiness. These had been a young girl's joyful expectations; yet now all that she looked upon was sunk a hundred times deeper in ruin than it had been in the hour of her hope.

Miss Martha did not dwell upon these thoughts at all, but gathered up her wits and her skirts, and held both well in control, as she confronted the sour visage of the house. She remembered it well: she had known it morose, and threatening, and wo-begone; but she saw now the marks of twenty years of extra desolation on its front. It had gained an air of surly recklessness, and much of its dignity was gone. There was a savage raggedness about its chimneys and window-sills and door-steps; tufted with tall, wild grass, and fluttering with streamers of the most flaunting weeds. The greenness of the earth had not been content with eating up the approaches to the walls, but seemed resolved to makes its way under the very roof itself.

Miss Martha saw the one cow feeding on the lawn, and the few famished hens that were pecking about the door-step. The door was opened by a dreadful old woman, a mass of rags and patches, whose face was disfigured apparently by the grime and discontent of years; a creature who was held in aversion by the country because, for some reasons best known to herself, she had chosen to devote her services to the miser of Tobereevil. It was doubtless but seldom that she was required to answer a summons at that inhospitable door; and she looked as scared at the wholesome apparition of Miss Mourne, as if she had been suddenly confronted by a gang of thieves.

All across the vast and empty stone hall, and away in the chamber where he stood at the moment, Simon Finiston heard wrangling at his door. Old Tibbie's discordant voice made a noise among the rafters like the sound of a loud quarrel. Miss Martha's tones did not travel so far, but every harsh note of Tibbie's had an echo of its own, and there might have been an angry crowd upon the door-step.

The miser had been pacing up and down his room, being in a humor more than usually timorous. As he walked he twisted his hands together, and at intervals struck his forehead in the agony of his mind. He was beginning to fear that his memory failed him. He was subject to momentary forgetfulness of the exact position of each tittle of his possessions. Sometimes, for an instant, he could not remember in which pocket he had placed the key of the drawer, in which he kept the key of the closet, in which was hid the key of the desk, where lay safely, under heaps of yellow papers, the key of the safe in which his money was stored. This noise in the hall alarmed

him. There were loaded pistols upon a bench in a corner, and he placed his hand upon one in terror, and looked towards the door. The door opened, and Miss Martha came in, having vanquished Tibbie, and sent her growling to her den.

"You need not be alarmed, sir," said she cheerfully; "I am come to rob you of nothing but a few moments of your time."

Then these two, who had been lovers, looked upon one another.

The old man was tall, withered, and blighted-looking, and so ill-clad that the blast from the door seemed to pierce him where he stood. It was difficult to believe that he had once been handsome; yet the features were imposing, though hacked by the wrinkles and hollows of the flesh. Once the countenance had been bland; but there were snarling lines defacing it now that made one shrink from the creature, shadowy as he was. Time had been when the powdered curls had hung gracefully over the polished forehead, when the complexion had worn a manly hue above the dainty lace of his ruffles, and when his well-cut profile had looked all the more stately from the becomingness of the quaint and jaunty queue. Time had been when no finer foot and leg had stepped down the country-dance. Now the limbs hung lank and limp, the knees clinging together under the patched and threadbare garb.

A violent fit of agitation seized him as Miss Martha spoke. Amazement, shame, and embarrassment struggled all together in his face. It was not the sight of Miss Martha that had moved him, but the sound of her voice. The twenty years had done their work upon her too; and, out of the fogs of his puzzled brain, he might hardly have recognized her. She had never been a beauty, only one of those maidens whose temper and wit idealize the homeliness of their features in the eyes of all those who come under their spell. A husband who had married Martha in her youth would have gone on thinking her a beauty until her death; but a lover who had not seen her since her youth would now wonder to find that she had altered into a plain-featured woman. The memory would present her as a person of rare charms, rather than a creature of mere freshness and comeliness, shining with good sense and grace; but Simon knew her by her voice, it echoed yet her steady self-containment and good-will, and now that the sparkle had left her eyes, it was the truest messenger of the spirit still within her.

The soul of the miser was stabbed on the instant by the idea that here was his former love come in person to reproach him, to try to assert something of her olden power, so as to wheedle him into lowering her heavy rent. He could not talk to her face to face, and he would not; and as she was there confronting him, and, being nearest the door, in a way held him prisoner, he instinctively put up a blind which might enable him to hold parley with her at ease.

A look of cunning gleamed out of the confusion of his face, and he became tranquil.

"Pray be seated, madam," he said with an assumption of benevolence and stateliness. He drew his frail garment around him, and sat down on one of the few old carved oaken chairs that were in the room. To the cushions of these still clung a few fragments of the ruby-tinted velvet, which had made some attempt at covering them when Martha had seen them last. The chilly March sun-gleam flickered down out of the uncurtained window above his head, and laughed over his chair, and lit up the variegations of his many-colored robe. The room was sheathed in oak; yet the floor was rotted and broken in many places. The spiders had been at work to make draperies for the windows, and cobwebs were the only hangings on the walls. The ceiling had been painted; but the damp had superadded many pictures of its own, whose rude outlines obtruded themselves among flowers, and hid smiling, fading figures under their grievous blots.

"I have expected this visit," said Mr. Finiston, with a courtly air, while yet Miss Martha was trying to right her thoughts, which had been somewhat thrown awry by the first glimpse of the picture now before her. "You are probably a messenger from my tenant at Monasterlea, a relation perhaps. I had the pleasure of knowing Miss Mourne many years ago, and I see some likeness. A very respectable tenant she is, but pays me such a dreadfully low rent, — such a dreadfully low rent!"

He shook his head from side to side with his eyes averted from his visitor, and rubbed his hands slowly, and rocked himself in his chair.

Miss Martha drew her breath hard, and gazed at him fixedly. He would not meet her eyes. In a few moments her amazement abated, and her presence of mind returned. She believed that he had recognized her, but she could not be sure. At all events, either his cunning cowardice or his want of memory might make the task she had undertaken less difficult.

"I need not introduce myself," she said. "It is true I am but the messenger of another. I came from Monasterlea, but not upon the business of your tenant."

"Eh?" asked he sharply. "Not upon your — not upon her business? What then? Not, I hope, with a story from any of these smaller rascally tenants who want their land for nothing, and would drive a wretched landlord to the workhouse? If you come, madam, about them, I will wish you a good-morning on the instant. A good-morning, madam. I wish you a very good-morning."

He arose hastily, and made a grotesque bow, — a tremulous, mocking attempt at courtesy; and his face had begun to work with a passion which brought out all those snarling lines upon it.

"Stay, sir!" said Miss Martha; and her quick, steady tone affected him so that he dropped back nervelessly into his chair.

"I am come altogether upon affairs of your own," said Miss Martha, — "to bring you news. Your brother's wife is dead, Mr. Finiston."

He pricked up his ears, and sat bolt upright.

"Well, madam, I should not be surprised. A spendthrift creature who would not thrive. She came here to see me with lace trimmings on her dress; but I told her my mind, and I pointed out to her the destitution that would fall upon her. I understand that her husband died of starvation, the consequence of his improvidence and her extravagance. They would have dragged me down to want with themselves; but I was much too wise for that. I was always a sparing man, madam; and it is thanks to my economy that I have still bread to eat, and have got a roof over my head."

"I find that you are misinformed," said Miss Martha. "Your brother died of fever; and he was a happy man, and a prudent one, while he lived. His wife was a noble woman, who for years denied herself many comforts in the hope of being able to provide for her son. She has died without fulfilling this purpose; and all her slight means have disappeared with herself. I have come here expressly to tell you that her son is now alone, and without means of living; and her son, sir, is Paul Finiston, your nephew and heir."

The old man's face had grown darker and more frightened at every word she spoke.

"Well, well, well," he said hoarsely, clutching his chair with both hands, and gazing now straight at Miss Martha, without thinking of who she was. "Heir, she said heir! Ay! And pray, madam, who says there is any thing to inherit? Barely enough property to keep a man alive, with the expenses of a servant, and a cat to keep down the rats. Would you rob an old man of his crust, madam? Would you take it out of his mouth to give it to a young beggar who can work, madam?"

"That is not what we propose, sir," said Miss Martha unflinchingly. "We ask you to use a small part of your wealth only to help the poor boy to independence. Even a few hundred pounds"—

A bitter shriek burst from the old man's lips; and he got up trembling in a paroxysm of passion.

"Away!" he cried, waving his hand over his head. "Away! you who deserted me in my need, and now come back to rob me! I will not have you sitting there looking at me. I will not" — He was tottering towards her with his menacing hand; but poor Miss Martha, cowed at last, here rose in trepidation, and fled from the house.

She was too old for tears and lamenting; but she walked home from Tobereevil over miles of ground that had grown infinitely bleaker since the morning. The cold March air seemed to pinch her heart.

"You who deserted me in my need," quoth she tearfully. "Why, was I not patient? was I not patient?" but Miss Martha would have been ashamed to let her doubts and regrets be known. None were in her confidence but the trees, and the primrose drifts, and the chilly blue peaks of the hills. She complained of nothing when she reached home but a slight touch of rheumatism from that pitiless east wind.

In the evening she was still a little ill from her rheumatism; so it was May who wrote the letter which Martha had meant to write. And young Paul Finiston received the following epistle in his garret: —

"MY DEAR PAUL, — It is Aunt Martha who is really writing this letter, only I am by accident holding her pen. Aunt Martha wishes to tell you that she has been to your uncle, Mr. Finiston; and that she is afraid he will never do any thing to help you, unless you come here to see him, when, perhaps, he might get fond of you. *I* am very glad that you have nothing to do with him; for he is a dreadful old man, and would not give a crumb to save any one from starving. Aunt Martha begs that you will come here, and stay. She will give you a nice little room off the cloisters

beside the chapel; and Aunt Martha says you are a great deal too sensible to be afraid of ghosts. She has made some new marmalade, and the garden is full of crocuses. *I* would like you very much to come, but I think it would be happier for you to earn your own money, and never mind that dreadful old man. Aunt Martha sends you a little note, which she says is a loan from me, and may be useful on your journey down here.

"I am, dear Paul,
"In aunt Martha's name,
"Your very old friend,
"MAY MOURNE."

"How odd that the little one should be wiser than the old woman!" said Paul. This is the way in which people think those the wisest who agree with themselves. "I should like to see her again; but I have no time to stay dallying with children."

Paul was a man of twenty-one now, looking old for his age, and feeling himself thirty-six at least. Of course May was still the little body in the prim gray pelisse, and with the sweet dark eyes. "Afraid of ghosts! Poor little baby! but she has treated me very honestly, and I will tell her what I am really afraid of." So Paul wrote: —

"MY DEAR OLD FRIEND, — I received your Aunt Martha's letter; and I approve so heartily of the sentiments of the person who held the pen, that I do not intend visiting Monasterlea, nor approaching one inch nearer to my respectable uncle at Tobereevil. I am not quite sure as to whether I could play the part of beggar or not, having never tried; but of this I am sure, that some hundreds of leagues of the sea should come between us. Upon nearer acquaintance I might do him some harm. Is there not a prophecy included in that time-honored curse of our family? I might never be able to forget that I am a kinsman of the miser, and might be tempted to do mischief for the sake of succeeding generations. If you do not understand this, ask your Aunt Martha, and she will explain it to you. Tell her, with my heartfelt thanks, that I am sorry she undertook a painful office for my sake; that I would fain be in the nice little bedroom off the cloisters, but I shall find myself sooner in the rigging of a foreign vessel. There is a captain from Liverpool now lying in the docks who will give me my passage for my services. I have here no prospect that I can see, except that of being a clerk or a porter; and I prefer bodily labor in a new country.

"And now, my dear little old friend, good-by. Tell your Aunt Martha that I accept your loan, and will sew it in my coat against time of sickness. Tell her not to count it a bad debt. I commit my mother's grave to her memory and yours. If you keep it in your minds, I shall not feel quite deserted.

"PAUL FINISTON."

Paul little thought of the storm which this letter was to create at Monasterlea. Miss Martha turned pale when she read it; and, for the first time in her life, spoke angrily to her niece.

"May! May!" she cried, "what was in that letter? I intrusted the writing of it to you; and you have driven the poor boy across the sea!"

"I did not mean it," said May, weeping. "I only said that I would rather he earned money for himself."

"I told you to write a welcome; and you have warned him away," said Miss Martha. "Oh! why did I not write myself? The boy will be drowned, and we shall have done it between us. Oh, you cruel, strange girl! O Elizabeth! poor Elizabeth!"

"Aunt Martha!" said May, springing up alert. "Cannot we go to Dublin and stop him?"

"Quick, then!" said Miss Martha; and in another hour they were upon the road.

Arrived in Dublin, they traced Paul from his old dwelling to a humbler lodging. Here they were informed that the young man — a gentleman indeed he was — had left the night before, and gone on board a ship lying at the quay. They hurried down to the quay, disappointed and hopeless, to gaze among the vessels, and ask questions. It was early in the morning; and they had been driving all day yesterday, and all last night. The sun was shining gayly on the bridge as they half crossed it, and stood leaning over the side. A vessel was moving slowly at some distance, clumsily disengaging itself from the craft around. A faint cheer reached their ears, making them look to this quarter; and May saw Paul on the deck of the moving ship.

"Where, where?" said Miss Martha.

"Oh, Aunt Martha, there! That tall young man with his hat off!"

They left the bridge, and hurried along the quay. They came almost alongside of the ship; but it was too far away for any thing but signs to pass between Paul and his friends. He had recognized

Miss Martha at once, but not so easily the maiden by her side. Her hat had fallen back on her shoulders, her face was flushed with anxiety and grief, her hands were involuntarily extended towards the ship. Paul folded his arms, and gazed sadly at her figure till the ship carried him away, and crowds of tall masts rose up and hid her from his sight. He took her image thus away with him, — the loveliest young maiden, he thought, his eyes had ever seen.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WOODS BECKON.

Five years have passed since Paul Finiston sailed away with the Liverpool captain. Many changes have taken place of course. For instance, May is a woman, and Aunt Martha has begun to wear spectacles. The rose-hedges at Monasterlea have grown thicker between the garden and the tombstones, and the grave of Father Felix has got a cross; but no events have happened of more importance than these.

The miser of Tobereevil is still a mystery of iniquity to the people who starve in their cabins to pay him the rents which he extorts. He looks a little more shadowy and ragged than ever as he glides about his grounds, rubbing his lean hands, and looking nervously over his shoulder. People who speak to him say he is more irascible than he used to be; but these are few besides old Tibbie, Con the fool, and a saturnine lawyer who appears at proper intervals to collect the rents. Con is often at Tobereevil. He picks a bone over the ashes with Tibbie in the kitchen, and sleeps on some straw in a corner. He is the only company old Simon will tolerate of an evening; but it is true that the miser likes to see him sitting chattering his idiot's speech on one of the old oaken chairs opposite his own, or, still better, performing antics in the middle of the floor. Perhaps it is because any other visitor would require some kind of entertainment in the way of food, or drink, or firing, and yet that the miser must sometimes see a friend. But Tibbie will tell us that Con has a right to come and go at Tobereevil. Con is her sister's son, and he is also, she says, the nephew of Simon. It is a fact that there was a third brother, who lived and died in poverty at the other end of Ireland. While Con was a child Tibbie appeared at Tobereevil with the urchin by the hand, and told her story to every one who met her. Some laughed at her, and others believed her; but none knew whether she could substantiate her claim. At all events she engaged to be the miser's housekeeper, and in this situation she has remained ever since; and Con comes and goes, and lives about the country. Tibbie will tell us that he will inherit Tobereevil, having full as good a right as the son of that fine captain and his madam who came spying here once; and she asks eager questions of the lawyer, who nods his head gravely in her witchlike face, and — perhaps being afraid of her, as he now and then passes nights at Tobereevil — does not dash her hopes. As for Con himself, his fool's wits carry no knowledge of the matter. All he knows of the miser is that he hates him with an instinctive hate and fear, mixed with a certain fascination which draws the poor lad to Tobereevil, and prevents his daring to run away when it pleases old Simon to call him to his presence. He sits gazing uneasily in the old man's eyes, like a bird charmed by a hawk; but he also has a curious dread of letting the miser perceive his disgust. When urged to amuse him, he does so with the most boisterous of frolics; no man in his senses could so cleverly hide an agony of terror under gambols of wild mirth. Con lives so much among the people that their wrongs are rankling in his heart; and, though he may not be wise enough to understand all things, yet he knows the sound of a curse or a sob when he hears it; and he has certain ideas linked inseparably in his mind, — curses and sorrow, and the name of Simon Finiston.

As for Sir John and Lady Archbold, the varieties in their lives have been many since the day of that wild visit to Monasterlea. Her child in health by her side, Lady Archbold had set herself to work to make up for the little time that had been lost; to forget her sorrow, and to enjoy her life. She had got her own way, as she had always been accustomed to get it; and she no longer believed it possible that fate or Heaven could have ever meant to venture to contradict her. She had long assured her husband that the motion through the air had alone cured their Katherine; that doctors were humbugs, and priests impostors. That wary old man had known very well the effect of fresh air on such a patient! Yet, to be sure, they owed it to themselves to seem grateful. They had gone, no doubt, to ask a favor; and, after all, the favor had been granted. Lady Archbold frowned when her husband attempted to check her in her haughty discourse, which criticised

pretty equally the doings of both heaven and earth; but she made no objection when he spoke of sending a present to Monasterlea. Some one there must get a gift from their hands, so a present was sent to May with Miss Archbold's love. It was a valuable work-box of Indian carving, with fittings of filigree silver. The little girl had been a nice little girl, said Lady Archbold; and Katherine had pronounced her to be highly agreeable: she was really deserving of such a handsome box. And the present was accepted, after some hesitation on Miss Martha's part, and was duly installed as an ornament in the parlor at Monasterlea; but May did not hoard it among her treasures as she would have done had Katherine not slighted her dead uncle. She did not rub it all over with a loving touch, nor gaze at it with delight, as she often did Paul's black cross. The box took its place as an ornament of the house, and was admired, and nothing more.

Lady Archbold's plan of self-indulgence included the over-indulgence of her daughter. Katherine was allowed to do any thing she pleased, to have all she wished for, to love and entertain herself with any one she fancied, to dislike whom she chose, and to punish whom she disliked. She was Lady Archbold's only child; and it was good enough work for the world to amuse her with the best it had to give. Had she been less beautiful, her father would have perceived sooner what in the end he had to see; he had to admit that the girl was growing up ignorant and unruly. She would not learn nor obey. Her passions were boisterous, her covetousness unbounded. Her appetite for praise, for amusement, for display and power, were alike insatiable and intolerable. She was becoming irksome, even to her parents. So Katherine was at last taken from Camlough, whence many weeping governesses had departed in their time, and was placed at a boarding-school in England.

But even then all the trouble was not over. Whatever might be the reason, Katherine Archbold did not remain long at any one school. Mistresses were too harsh, companions too exacting, or Katherine was unmanageable and selfish. Sir John and Lady Archbold found the whole world in cruel conspiracy against their idol. At last they took her abroad, and placed her at a fashionable Parisian school. Here, after some time, there were no longer complaints of her; and, after two years, she was found a woman fully grown, with her beauty quite developed, a thousand fascinations and accomplishments acquired, and with manners as silken as her hair. Again Lady Archbold was triumphant over fate. Her effort had vanquished yet another threatened disappointment. The father and mother exulted over her, and carried her away, glorifying her to the fullest satisfaction of their pride. They decked her, and flattered her, and bowed down before her; And, after some months of travelling up and down in foreign countries, they took her to London, and presented her to the world. And then there came more travelling and visiting among English friends. A home, however noble, being hidden behind Irish mountains, was not likely to be soon sought by Miss Archbold.

It was just about this time, when Katherine was dancing out her first season, and while May Mourne, a young woman of another sort, was waxing towards a healthier maturity, that old Tibbie made a move at Tobereevil, which was destined to have an influence on the lives of the two girls.

The miser was sick. What was the matter with him no one knew outside the gates; for Simon would not hear of a doctor, and Tibbie undertook to cure him. True, it was said that Tibbie knew more of the rank and poisonous growths that were hidden in the darkest spots in the heart of the Wicked Woods than of kindly and healing herbs such as restore human life; but Tibbie knew what she was about, and she undertook to cure her master.

He lay in a sick-room, the ceiling of which let in the rain. The windows were stuffed with rags in sundry places, and the wind came in boldly through many loopholes and crannies. The blankets were scant on the bed; but this did not matter, as the miser would not remove any of his ordinary clothing. He wore vest and hat and boots as he lay, with a stick at his hand to help him to spring up if needful. Did he lie in his bed as a sick man should lie, he might be cheated into a serious illness. In the end he should be made away with as dead, while some one would get hold of his possessions. Tibbie's moving shadow, as she prowled about, haunted him from all corners of the room. Tibbie might want to strangle him were he not ready to defend himself with that stick. He hated Tibbie; and his fears distorted her into a demon, whereas she was only a cunning old woman. And Con was his only refuge from Tibbie; yet the miser was too sick to relish the pranks of his fool.

Tibbie never brought him his scanty messes of food, nor his dose of healing herbs, that she did not also administer a bitter which he could not swallow; to wit, a

hint that her master should make his will.

"Make it, an' sign it, an' lock it bye," she would say. "It won't shoot nor poison ye. It won't give ye faver nor cholic. Ye'll live the longer for knowin' that all ye have'll go to poor innicent Con, yer brother's own child, instead of bein' wrastled over, an' torn to bits by sthrangers. The simple boy'il put nothin' to waste, but keep up the place as it's always been kep', an' be a credit to the family name."

The miser groaned under her hands, but gave her fair words, because he was afraid of her. He was obstinate, however, and would not satisfy her. Then she began to punish him. She kindled a large fire in the hungry grate, consuming coals and wood before his eyes with such speed that the miser cried at the waste, as though his own withered bones had been crackling in the furnace. Then she brought wine to his side, and fat roasted hens, and large rolls of butter, and tea, and ham, besides every other delicacy that could be had in the country, taking care to magnify the cost of each dish as she laid it before him; and, when she had tortured him sufficiently in this way, she went away, and left him unattended in his lair. At last he declared that he could deny her no longer, but must crave her to bring him ink and a pen. He would beg her to stand by while he wrote to his lawyer. The lawyer must come quickly, and draw up the will.

Now was Tibbie's moment of exultation. She felt rewarded for all her ingenuity when she saw the miser's lean hand scrawling the words over the paper; but Tibbie was not able to read, or she would have known even then that her master had outwitted her.

Tibbie had gone too far, had been a thought too clever. She had tortured him, so that he desired to be revenged on her. He had never believed Con to be his brother's son; would not have suffered him to come near him if he had. Tibbie was an impostor, but she was useful to him. Con was an impostor, but he amused him. But now Tibbie must be punished, and there was a nephew named Paul. He would torment his tormentor by bringing her face to face with the heir of Tobereevil. Heir of Tobereevil! The very thought of such a title enraged him; but Tibbie must be punished.

So the letter to the lawyer contained instructions relating to an advertisement. Through the medium of every English and Irish paper notice was to be given to one Paul Finiston that his presence was earnestly requested at Tobereevil. The lawyer read the letter thrice over, and turned it upside down, and turned it inside out; but there was no mistake about it, and the advertisement went flying over the world.

But long before the notice fell under Paul's eye the miser was well and stronger than he had been for many years. Tibbie had fallen back into her proper place, knowing that her master had slipped through her fingers this time. The miser's anxiety to punish Tibbie had grown weaker, while his superstitious dread of his kinsman had returned with more than its former strength; and he was fully prepared to resist Paul Finiston, if so be the lad should prove so greedy as to obey his uncle's summons.

CHAPTER IX.

KATHERINE WITH A LOVER.

THE Archbolds had been out of the country for two or three years. Those hopes and fears, and anxieties and delights, about their troublesome and idolized daughter had kept them in such a tumult of going and coming, and not knowing where they were to be next, and what they were to do afterwards, that they never had been able to drag themselves so far out of her reach as to repose themselves, even for a day in the solitude of Camlough; but now they were coming home. The news spread gladly over the country. Sir John was a good landlord, and pleasant-spoken with his people. He was "that kind, you wouldn't think he was a gintleman at all," whereas the agent might be "an imperor for impidence!" There would be no more ejectments; there would be no more snapping of whips in an honest but helpless man's face; for the agent was better-mannered when the master was in the country. Even the ladies got a welcome, which, in truth, they had never earned. It was a fine thing, after all, to have a grand lady going stepping about the mountains, even though Lady Archbold's high nose might be a thing of awe to the peasant. So the Archbolds were at home; and they had brought with them an Anglo-American mother and her son, about whom there is a story which shall be told.

It may be that this castle of Camlough was not in reality more magnificent than many other dwellings of its kind. Perhaps here surprise added something to

splendor. The castle in itself was an imposing mass of stateliness, old and gray enough to accord with the scenery around it; yet with no signs of decay, strong and grand, and overflowing even through its windows and doors with the fulness of the adornments and luxuries of the day. The valley in which it stood was in reality "Camlough in the hills;" for the hills had opened and made place for it down among their knees, kept away the harsher winds, and invited down the kindly sun, till, under their fostering care, it had grown rich in fertility and beauty. The loveliness of its glens and dingles made fairy-land in the fissures of the awful rocks which overhung it, where delicate foliage had climbed dizzy heights, clothed them with color, and softened their wild outlines. The scarlet berries and light plumage of the mountain-ash hung clear against the deep blue sky. A hundred waterfalls made silver tracks down the brown-purple steeps of the mountains, like gleaming stairways into the clouds; and there were lakes in the violet summits of those broom-covered mountains, and wildernesses of beauty in their hollows. A torrent roared all winter at the back of the castle, on its way from some lofty tarn to the sea; for at one side the valley the encircling hills gave way, and the blue Atlantic filled the gap on the horizon, with its flecks of creamy rock and amethystine islands, its flights of white birds and rare flitting sails. Craft from the nearest fishing-village on the coast would shelter betimes under the cliffs; and sometimes a stranger would alight upon the warm gold sands of the creek to explore this nook of beauty, which was so generously cultivated and so fruitful; so hidden from the world, as if giants had built it round with strong, high walls on purpose to keep it a solitude forever. Seals would bask upon the sand in the sun; and it was haunted by a mermaid, who was to be seen swimming round the headlands in the gloaming. Golden eagles barked to one another over the mouths of the deep caves through which the high green water with thunder and music rolled itself heavily into mysterious abysses of the earth, coming back again moaning, with much tumult and confusion.

The castle itself stood at the back of the valley, well set against the brawniest-wooded mountain of the range. Blooming gardens gathered round it, blushing up to its windows, and laughing in at its doors, and wandering thence into wide, mossy lawns, and soft, leafy slopes and dells. There was an exuberant growth of flowers everywhere; and people fancied that their colors were more brilliant at Camlough than at any other place. Certain it is that fruits would ripen here in open air that would not grow out of hot-house in other parts of the land. A walk round the back premises of the castle explained the mystery of how every thing was done in order, and kept in order, in the place as perfectly as though Camlough were an outskirt of London. All around a vast paved yard cottages stood in rows, which were the homes of the tradesmen whom it was useful to have at hand; and there were trees growing in the middle of the yard, and garden-beds round the windows of the cottages. Trees leaned over the walls, and nodded about the chimneys, and the peaks of the encircling mountains looked over into the yard. The good wives knew better than to be untidy; for many pretty presents came from the castle to the thrifty housewife: and they would sit out of the sun under their trees with their sewing, while their children were playing about them, and their good men were busy in the sheds at the end of the yard.

Thus it was that Sir John dwelt among his people like a feudal lord surrounded by his retainers. Numbers of his tenants lived high above on the hills, or their dwellings nestled in bloomy places between the rocks, by the side of running streams, or peeped from behind shelter of rugged cliffs against the sea. There was no scarcity of any thing about Camlough, neither of human beings, nor of kine, nor of flocks, nor of birds, nor of deer and other wild animals, nor of the produce of the earth.

It was midsummer time; and Katherine entertained a hay-making group, sitting under a haycock in a meadow, telling them anecdotes of the neighborhood, giving ludicrous descriptions of the people, including the miser of Tobereevil and the dead monk who had lived at Monasterlea. It was the midsummer heat that specially reminded her of that strange, wild visit that she had once paid to the monastery; and she related the story for the amusement of her guests. She was aware that this was a picturesque incident in her life; and it charmed her to sketch herself as the centre of a picture. There was at least one person by her side who was eager to swallow any morsel which her vanity might throw him. It was scarcely likely that any young man should be many hours at Camlough, and not be written down in the list of Katherine's suitors; it was still less likely that he should be welcome there if he chose to keep his heart to himself. Kathe-

rine was a queen who would have none around her but her courtiers. In the present instance here was a willing if a suffering captive, who had already graced many triumphs of his royal mistress. The name of this unfortunate was Christopher Lee. He was not a wit, nor a genius, nor handsome; neither was he as yet a millionnaire. Whether he ever should be the latter or not was a question at present in the balance. It seemed hanging upon the blowing of a straw. It all lay at the mercy of a woman's little humor, — a yes or a no, a smile or a frown; for Christopher was one of those headlong people who will stake the whole world upon a die. He was a large, light-haired, long-faced youth, with fair, dim eyes, and not overmuch brains under his smooth, pale forehead. His long, eager lips were too nervous and full of feeling to keep safe company with the simplicity of his eyes. He was not like a man to do well with the world unless fortune might choose to take him in her lap, and make a pet of him: and this had seemed a likely chance; for fortune is very fond of odd playthings. She could not have done better than to take Christopher on her knee; and this is the young man of whom a story could be told. To be the heroine of that story was Katherine Archbold's liveliest excitement at this moment; and it must be said that she looked fit to be the heroine of the most fascinating tale that ever was told, as she sat against a hayrick, holding a hat crowned with poppies above her golden head.

It ought to be a pleasant task to describe Miss Archbold. The description of a blonde beauty is always charming; and Katherine was a blonde of the most genuine type. Her hair was of the purest sun-color. When loosened, it fell round her like a cloak, silken in texture, rippling and flossy, and descending below her knees. When tied and pinned up in the order of fashion, it was found woven into a massive crown of gold, which alone proclaimed her a queen by its glory upon her head. Her features came as near to the old Greek model as features ever do in these countries; and her eyes were blue, — the light-receiving, forget-me-not blue. The only thing you could find fault with was the expression of her mouth; but not many people thought of it, as it certainly did not mar the physical beauty of her face. The mouth in itself was a handsome one, but to a few observers there was a failure somehow. Through all the many changes of the countenance it was not found to be a mobile mouth. It would keep a hard secret well while the eyes were declaring that this face was the most telltale face ever seen. Sometimes a tinge of cruelty constrained it to be frank, and to pain those worshippers who might be watching for its smiles. And unfortunately this cruelty was now the mischievousness of fun; but the cruelty of a will that would not suffer itself to be crossed. She was tall and robust, and stately in her carriage, and more costly as to her raiment than a princess.

"I wish I had seen that old monk," said Christopher, rolling his pale eyes with enthusiasm. "But for him," he added to Katherine, "you might not be in the world; and what would my life have been then?" he asked blankly, as he looked this new idea in the face.

"You are a fool," said Katherine emphatically, but in the softest whisper.

Christopher gazed up at her, and blinked with delight. He accepted her accusation, and enraptured himself over the idea of his folly. It was true that he had staked every thing on her caprice; but he dreamed that all goodness and happiness were to be included in the reward of his venture. In the end that was soon to come, his foolishness must be found equal to the most cautious wisdom. This is what she had hinted in her more serious moods; and who would dare insinuate that she was untrue?

"A ridiculous little mummy of a man," went on Katherine.

"Who is dead, however," interrupted her father very gently. "Come, Kate, we are not going to laugh at dead men."

Miss Archbold bowed her head, and frowned under the shelter of her hat, and exerted severe control over her temper while she tore up fresh roses in her fingers.

"That is how I am afraid you will tear up my heart," said Christopher, trying to make a joke; but a flash from her eyes made him quail as he spoke, while the next moment he was blinded by a shower of rent rose-leaves.

"Oh, you fool, you fool!" murmured Katherine, who had seen his fright, and who had melted again as suddenly as she had flamed. Christopher was himself again; for that musical murmur of a curious pet name was the very signal and watchword of his delight. And he was right in expecting that she would now be very good to him; for she dropped him one sweet word after another, while she picked up her flowers, and pretended to put them to rights again; as if sorry for the destruction she had made.

Mrs. Lee sighed as she looked at the picture of the beautiful young woman sit-

ting smiling in the hay, and the bewitched young man at her feet. Mrs. Lee was a troubled-looking woman, with large brown eyes, and very odd manners. This son of hers was like to break her heart.

Sir John stood a little aloof from the group, and had evidently at this moment got something on his mind. He had done a good-natured thing, and was nervous about confessing it. He was not master of his castle which people envied him; but the truth came out at last, — he had invited a young friend to pay a visit to his daughter.

"Not the old lady from Monasterlea, I hope?" said Katherine, without a frown.

"No," said the father, laughing because relieved of his secret. "Not the old lady, only the little girl."

Katherine hesitated to smile, but afterwards smiled brightly. The recollection of little May was very pleasant to her. There never had been a lover on her list who had admired her more frankly than little May.

"It was rather premature of you to give an invitation," said Lady Archbold, who had not seen Katherine's smile. "The girl was a nice child enough when we saw her; but, brought up in the wilderness as she has been, the chances are that she is uncouth and uneducated."

Katherine rather liked this suggestion.

"Whether or not," she said imperiously, "we are going to have her here."

"Certainly, my darling, if you wish it," her ladyship said hurriedly. And then seeing that Mrs. Lee looked strangely at her, she drew away that lady to stroll with her under some distant trees, and to explain by the way how generous and hospitable her dear Katherine was, and what a lively attachment she had always cherished to a stupid little girl whom she had not seen for years. Sir John also made a thankful escape, being relieved of his confession, and having regained his peace of mind.

When the elders had gone, Katherine stood up, yawned a little, threw herself back against the haycock, and remained reclining there, as if lazily enjoying her life, and the sunshine, and every soft influence of the moment. She gazed towards the clouds, the hills, the trees, the lawns, and then slowly brought her eyes to Christopher's gaze, which was bent upon her full at the time. Then she smiled in his eyes, just as if she had been a true-hearted woman who had pledged her love, and was not ashamed of its being seen.

"Katherine, Katherine!" cried Christopher, as if in bodily pain, "why will you love to torture me? Why will you not speak out at once? When will you answer me? When will you promise to be my wife?"

She took his outstretched hand tenderly in her own, and patted it soothingly with her jewelled fingers.

"Poor little Christopher!" she said, "poor dear Christopher! why will you not be patient?"

"Because I love you!" broke out the poor youth; "I love you, — bitterly!" And he fairly burst into tears.

"I do not like bitter love," said Katherine coldly, letting fall his hand.

Christopher dashed off his tears, and turned aside with an impulse of sullen shame.

"It is hard to know how to please," he said, "when one's heart is breaking."

"Breaking, is it?" said Katherine lightly. "Oh, no! don't let it be so foolish. Come, now, you need not look so sad. Why should we hurry over the pleasant part of life? There is no reason for haste, is there?"

"There *is* reason for haste," said Christopher vehemently.

"Nay, now, what is it?" said Katherine, staring at him.

But Christopher's unruliness was over for the present. He had blushed crimson, and had nothing more to say. He folded his long arms, and gazed doggedly on the ground.

"Come, now, you are sulky!" said Katherine. "Cannot you be good-tempered? And I was just going to offer you a treat."

"A treat," echoed Christopher, without raising his eyes.

"Yes, a treat." She laid her hand coaxingly on his arm. "Are you quite too ill-humored to ride with me to-morrow?"

"Not quite," replied Christopher, unbending.

"In that case, I am going to Monasterlea," said Katherine.

"To Monasterlea?" said Christopher astray.

"Yes: to unearth a young woman out of the ruins."

And Katherine laughed gayly, expecting a new excitement in the meek-eyed worship which little May was going to give her.

CHAPTER X.

MAY WITHOUT A LOVER.

MAY was now twenty years old, and she considered herself past her youth. She had known herself a tall young person since the age of fifteen; and five years make a long time to look back upon. She had now cast off the crazy imaginations of her earlier days, and settled down to serious middle age. She would have given a very bad account of her past life, if you could by any subtlety have entrapped her into talking about herself. She would have told you that she had been an idle, roving scapegrace, spending her time wandering over moors and haunting mountain-caves, making acquaintance with rabbit-burrows and plovers' nests. She had cultivated the excitement of lurking in ambush for hours to watch the flights of an eagle, and the luxury of lying on her back in the long, warm broom, to enjoy with perfect ease the ecstasy of the lark. She had so lived among the animals and birds, that she had made sisters and brothers of them in her own wild way, and believed that they sympathized with her thoughts, while she had a scent and instinct equal to their own. To be sure she had picked up a little learning by the way; but every thing that was useful she had been apt to forget, whereas every thing that was visionary and romantic had clung to her without effort upon her part. If she had got poetry by heart, and carefully studied portions of Shakspeare and others masters, it was for the pleasure that it gave her, and not through studious desires. Part of her delight in it was the reciting of passages aloud to the winds and the birds, while perched upon a rock in some of her favorite wildernesses. If she had read tales and romances with breathless excitement, it was that she found an unutterable interest in making her way into a world of life and movement, thronged with varieties of people who were in every way different from herself and Aunt Martha. If she devoured the Bible and the lives of the saints, it was because they kindled a magnificent sense of awe within her, and made existence supernatural and heroic. She had composed psalms out of her own worshipping heart, and sung them up to the clouds as she tramped about the hills. She had gathered round her dogs, and tame rabbits, and jackdaws, and improvised long legends and romances for their benefit, in which figured crowds of motley characters, angels and devils, fairies and witches, heroes and villains, every beautiful embodiment of goodness and ugly incarnation of wickedness. She had learned reading from curiosity, spelling from reading, grammar by observation, history in brilliant patches and pictures, and French and Italian by instinct, ear, and fancy. She picked up foreign languages as she picked up a tune. Geography, she would declare, had altogether slipped through her fingers; but she knew the names of most places, whether they were near or far away, and what kind of people were found living in them. She knew all about Australia, because Paul Finiston was there. In her rovings and questionings, readings and speculations, one idea had been uppermost in her mind, — life was a great mystery of joy. In order to penetrate it she climbed high rocks, battled with strong winds, consulted birds, beasts, and books, basked in the sun, dreamed by the fireside, prayed, laughed, wept, talked, mused; and at last, when she had explored every outlet of her life to its extreme limits, and wrought her up to a very high pitch of nervous fancy, Aunt Martha, who had been quietly observing her, spoke. It was now quite time that she should give up her childish freedom, and settle down into a useful, well-conducted young woman. On that occasion, May had burst into passionate tears. The humdrum life that she was dreading had overtaken her. Time would not spare her to her dear wild life. On receiving her lecture she had disappeared instantly, and for the day; but, in the evening, she presented herself in the parlor, tidy in person, serious, and ashamed. She was going to do all, and be all, that was expected of her.

So now, May, being twenty years old, and having been for three years laboring earnestly to tame herself, and walk in quiet ways, may be fairly said to have sown her wild oats. She wore housewifely clothing and smooth hair. She had put aside romances and plays and poems, and set herself to graver studies. She took to making pastry, and spent a considerable time at her spinning-wheel. She relinquished her idea that an excessive joy was the object of life, and prayed night and morning to be delivered from her dreams and fancies. She even thought of a likely spot for her grave, and wondered if it could be possible she should live to be as old as Aunt Martha, and then perhaps live longer still. In the mean time she was good to her poor neighbors, and as helpful as she was able; and she kept up her intercourse with the animals and birds. When she went out of a

morning to the sunny side of the ruin, and, nestling in the ivy, stretched out a hand and made a cooing sound, they all came round her, rabbits and pheasants and dogs and ducks and geese and chickens, the calf and the donkey, and the jackdaws from the belfry. Tame and wild, they clustered about her, and fed at her feet, or out of her hand; but she petted them now as a superior being, not as formerly when she was only their companion and playfellow. The enactment of this scene was the one folly of her day, all the rest of the time being spent in serious behavior and steady occupation. She was as staid and demure as any one could wish, or as any one could regret to see her. Miss Martha beheld the wholesome change in the girl, but thought all the time that the change was a little too extreme. Yet how was this to be avoided? What ought a young girl to be? Miss Martha looked back into her own youth, and sought in vain for any experience which might apply to her niece. Miss Martha had never been imaginative. Where one young person lives entirely with elder people, in an atmosphere at once antiquated and still, romantic and wild, it is likely that the young spirit will be either too much oppressed, or too much emancipated. Miss Martha did not quite see this; but she knew that a little change was sometimes wholesome for young people, and she wished that May had a little change.

Thus she had not given an absolute denial when Sir John had expressed a wish to see May at Camlough. She had conveyed the idea to the gentleman, that, if the ladies of his family exerted themselves properly, she would not insist that the thing could not be done. May, on hearing of the matter, had looked a little frightened, and had said very gravely, "I think I would rather not go." Yet a certain controlled excitement of expectation had evidently hung about her since.

On the day when Katherine came from Camlough to seek her, May, as it happened, was busy in the kitchen. Bridget was out for a holiday; and Miss Martha had stepped down to the meadow with old Nanny to hold counsel over a sickly cow. The sun was hot and strong, the yellow blind in the kitchen was down, and the window open; there was a pot of lavender and sweet-marjoram on the window-sill, and the fire winked under the saucepans; the walls were glittering with tin implements; and, in the middle of the red-tiled floor, sat May, shelling peas into an earthen dish. She was smooth and neat, and looked suitable to the time and place in her apron and green gingham gown.

From fifteen to twenty May had gained in beauty. She was not of more than middle height, her figure full yet slender, and replete with all womanly curves and fair lines. Her features were hardly so much regular as harmonious, large enough for dignity, yet small enough for feminine grace. Her eyes had still that brown-purple hue which Paul Finiston had thought so lovely, still those circling tinges of shadow which had charmed the old monk. Her hair was black, with a tinge of brown in it, her complexion of a creamy fairness, which made the darkness of her eyes very deep and striking, and a blush upon her face very perceptible and beautiful. Her mouth was, perhaps, the jewel of her face. Most lips can express joy in smiles and trouble in heaviness. It is a rarer thing to see a mouth which shows involuntarily all the subtle shades of feeling that hover between pleasure and pain, all the flickerings of fancy, perhaps the nervousness and steadfastness of a difficult courage. When you knew May a while, you forgot about the redness of her lips and the loveliness of their curves: you thought more about their thousand unuttered revelations.

"What an odd, ridiculous place!" cried Katherine, as she and her cavalier rode up to the gate of Monasterlea. And there was more here to discern of grandness and quaintness than Miss Archbold could take note of in a week. An artist would have seen it at a glance; but Katherine was not an artist, and saw something very unfinished in the majestic ruin with the homely cottage in its arms; the picturesque confusion of crosses and rose gardens, blooming hedges and black archways; the acres of mounded graveyard upon one side, and upon the other, and farther away, the corn-fields and the sweet farm-lands. It is true she had seen the place long ago; but she had not then thought it so exceedingly inelegant.

"It is fine!" cried Christopher, with a touch of that enthusiasm which Katherine had never felt, but immediately relapsed into a strain which pleased her better. "You beautified the whole place when you visited it years ago," he said, raving rapturously as he received her into his arms from her saddle.

The door of Miss Martha's dwelling stood open, and the blinds were all down to keep out the heat. There was no one about, and it suited Miss Archbold's humor at the moment rather to walk in without ceremony, than to stand knocking at the door. Meet-

ing no one, she proceeded to explore the house, looking into rooms left and right, and perfectly unconcerned as to how the dwellers in the cottage might approve of her intrusion. A mocking laugh from the passage came floating over the pea-pods and dishes to May, who looked up with notice of something unusual in the house; and there stood Katherine and her lover in the doorway.

As May arose, with quickened eye and color, in a pretty confusion to meet her, it must be confessed that Katherine received a shock. She had not counted on finding any thing so lovely here; did not want any thing so lovely at Camlough. But a moment passed, and the whisper of vanity had soothed and appeased her. She was more beautiful by far even than this; so much so, that there never could be rivalry between herself and this mountain-reared maiden. And in some sense the whisper spoke truth. As a mere piece of flesh and blood, as a statue of perfection to be measured and criticised, she was a handsomer creature than May.

"You have not forgotten me?" she said, smiling, and holding out both her hands, while the folds of her riding-habit fell away from them, making graceful drapery all round her on the floor.

"No, indeed," said May, stepping forward to take the hands.

"This is not my first visit to Monasterlea," said Katherine tenderly, "and I have very good reason to remember the first."

"She is changed," thought May triumphantly. "And how beautiful she is! Now I should like to go to Camlough."

"Your aunt has promised you to us," said Katherine, "and I have come to know when we may expect you." And all the while Miss Archbold was wondering how May would look if she were not dressed like a housemaid.

"But she cannot have much wardrobe here," she calculated, "and we shall get her as she is."

"Aunt Martha is in the meadow," said May. "Shall we go out and meet her? It is a pretty walk."

"Christopher, Miss Mourne; Miss Mourne, Mr. Lee," said Katherine, and the three young people stepped out into the sunshine. And then May remembered that she had heard that Miss Archbold was engaged to be married to a wealthy young gentleman who was staying at the house. This was the second young gentleman whom May had ever spoken to, and naturally she compared him with the first. Mr. Lee was amiable and manly-looking enough, but he had not the countenance and bearing of Paul.

Miss Martha was still engaged in her conference with Nanny over the cow, when she saw the three young figures bearing down upon her from the gate into the fields.

"Ah, this is very pleasant; Miss Archbold herself," said Miss Martha. "May shall certainly go: it will do her a world of good. And I declare there is the peddler coming across the hill. Nanny, run and stop the peddler. How lucky that he should come at this time!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE PEDDLER AT MONASTERLEA.

Two hours afterwards the parlor was all draped with the contents of the peddler's pack, while the peddler himself was being regaled in the kitchen, with Nanny piling his plate upon one hand, and Bridget coquetting with him on the other. Silks of many colors were festooned from the mantle-piece, the table, and a brilliant tabinet had been flung for display round Miss Martha's shoulders. May, meanwhile, leaning with her elbows on the back of an armchair, examined these splendors which had been spread out for her choice.

"Now, May, do look at this tartan silk," said Miss Martha persuasively. "Nothing could be prettier with your dark hair."

"I'd rather have black, Aunt Martha."

"But you have nothing else nice except white muslin, child. You will make yourself look like a magpie."

"Not a magpie; only a crow one day, and a pigeon the next. I needn't be a parrot, need I?"

"Well, well, have your own way. In my time young girls did not dress themselves in black, except for mourning."

"Have the tartan silk yourself, Aunt Martha."

"No, no, child: my day is over; but at least I am going to pick you a bunch of bright ribbons."

The peddler was called in to disclose the prices of his wares. He was a rather gypsy-like young man, with a red-brown skin, bushy black beard, and thick black hair, almost covering his forehead. A pair of bright dark eyes shone from under his heavy brows. He wore a suit of gray frieze and a low-crowned hat, and he blushed under the brownness of his skin when ushered into the presence of the ladies. He shot one keen glance at May, where she

stood leaning with her elbows on the back of her chair, and then drooped his eyes, and blushed again, so that Miss Martha set him down in her mind at once as a highly appreciative as well as modest young man. He was a stranger too; and she was curious to know where he had come from.

"Ahem! this is not our own peddler, my dear?" she said to May, as if willing to be persuaded that her eyes had deceived her.

"No, aunt. We hope," said May, turning to the stranger, "that nothing has happened to our friend who has been coming here for years?"

"I hope not, madam," said the peddler, with another delighted look at the young lady; "but to tell plain truth, I nivir seen him in my life. I'm started this summer on my own account intirely."

"I hope you may have success, I am sure," said Miss Martha, speaking with hesitation, as she adjusted her spectacles on her nose; "but I am a little in doubt as to whether it will be honorable in me to give you my custom or not."

"That's as ye plase, ma'am," said the peddler readily. "I wouldn't intherfair for the world wid the business of another honest man; but if it would be suitin' ye at all to take any thing I've got for this wanst, I'll give it to ye chape, and not be botherin' ye again."

"Very fair, very honorable, indeed," said Miss Martha; "and, as we are at this moment in need of what you have brought us, we must be forgiven for not waiting for the older friend."

"I have jewellery," said the peddler, producing a box. "Miss will excuse me, but I have got bright goold crosses, and han'some pearl beads, far gayer nor yon black thing that she has hangin' round her neck."

"My cross," said May quickly, and her hand went quickly to Paul's chain round her neck. "Thank you, you may put up your jewellery," she added. "This was given me by a friend, and I care for nothing finer."

The peddler blushed again, no doubt at the severity of the rebuke, but was silenced, and plunged into the recesses of his pack for more treasures.

"Oh, my man, my good man!" cried Miss Martha, as she looked over the price-list which he had put in her hand, "you will beggar yourself with the lowness of your prices. Silks like these cannot be sold at such a rate, I can tell you. We shall hardly see you coming back again if this is the way you intend to do business."

"May be not, ma'am, indeed," said the peddler, tossing his head; "but in the mane time them is my prices. To take a penny more would be the ruin o' my conscience."

Miss Martha put her head on one side, and looked at the salesman with a troubled air; but there was something in his manner that disarmed suspicion.

"Prices may have fallen," she said to May reflectively. "And now we can have a couple of these dainty chintzes."

"Thank ye, ma'am," said the peddler, as, the purchases being made, he picked up the money tendered him; "and now could ye be guidin' me to the houses of the ginthry in the neighborhood? I was thinkin' o' payin' a visit to Misther Finiston o' Tobereevil."

"I cannot say that I think you need be at the trouble of going there," said Miss Martha.

The peddler had shouldered his pack, and turned to go away.

"The young man hasn't come back yet, I suppose?" he asked, pausing in the doorway, hat in hand.

"The young man?" repeated Miss Martha.

"Oh, ay! Young Paul Finiston, the nephew."

"Do you know him?" burst eagerly from both women in a breath.

"Know him? Ay!" said the peddler, and tears rushed into his eyes as he looked from one to the other of the anxious faces before him. "At least I did know him,—knew him a young boy when I was knockin' about Dublin. He wouldn't look at a guinea before he'd spend it on the peddler's pack. Not if he had it, the poor gossoon! But men do change. Think ye, ladies, will he be a miser like his uncle? It's in the blood, so it is, they do say."

"It is not in *his* blood," said May stoutly, squeezing her black cross in her hand. "He is our friend, and we do not like to hear such questions."

The peddler here drooped his head in silence, so that his face could not be seen. "I ax your pardon," he said presently, in a very low voice.

"Oh, I am not angry!" said May heartily; "and he must not go away without some tea, Aunt Martha. Here, Bridget, Bridget, make the peddler some tea!"

Bridget obeyed readily, and, after the peddler was gone, appeared in the parlor with triumph on her face.

"Musha, then that's the gintlemanliest peddler that iver walked these roads yet, ma'am dear! Sure Nanny an' me bought what little we could rache to; an' afther he was gone, what but two fine shawls should

come flying through the winda! 'Presents for yez each!' says his voice out-by; but, when we run to the door, sorra sight o' him was to be seen!"

Miss Martha left off measuring the yards upon her fingers, and made a careful examination of the shawls.

"These are worth a guinea each if they are worth a penny. This is something very odd, no doubt," she said to May.

"You do not think the goods have been stolen, Aunt Martha?"

"My dear, I should be sorry to misjudge the young man; but I have a strong disinclination to put a needle in this silk."

"Don't then, aunty."

"But I must, you goose! If I were to go to jail for it afterwards, you shall have your gown."

"Well, I don't think thieves are very generous. He could easily sell all he had at his prices."

"I don't know about letting the servants wear these shawls."

"But then we must not touch the silk!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE PEDDLER AT TOBEREEVIL.

In the mean time the peddler was trudging through the woods towards the mansion of Tobereevil. He arrived at the back door, as a peddler should arrive, and was confronted by Tibbie, who looked more hideous than usual in the full blaze of the evening sun.

"Go 'way out o' this," was Tibbie's greeting. "We don't want no visitors here."

"Sorra visitor am I," said the peddler gayly; "so yer conscience may be at aise, ma'am."

"Nor stragglers naither," said Tibbie doggedly.

"Nor straggler naither," said the peddler, "only havin' brought ye a few han'some articles of dhress, ma'am."

Tibbie fell back, and gazed eagerly on the peddler's bundle. She was well aware that she stood in need of some covering. She was clothed in rags, and the rags were beginning to threaten that they would no longer hold together. Something she must get, were it only a piece of sacking, against the winter; and peddlers had left off coming to Tobereevil. Did she let this one go, he might never return.

"Come in, thin, will ye!" she said gruffly, "an' show what ye have got: but I warn ye not to be axin' yer high prices; for we know the worth o' money about here, so we do."

The peddler followed her down dark, unwholesome passages into the kitchen. It was a vast underground chamber, paved with black, reeking flags, its ceiling studded with hooks, from which no comfortable flitch was seen to swing. There were two great recesses in the wall, arched and chimneyed, holding enormous grates, which were eaten up with rust. Ovens and hotplates stood idly about, broken, dilapidated, stuffed with rags and dirt. In one of the recesses, a fire was burning on the flags, small and dwindling, fed by a few sticks of wood, and some stray scraps of turf. Before this fire, a woodcock was roasting, dangling from a string. A rough wooden stool drawn up before the fire, and a one pronged fork upon the flags, showed that Tibbie had been interrupted in her superintendence of the cookery.

"Be smart, my man, an' show us what ye've got; an' ye needn't be makin' eyes at the bird. It's for Simon's dinner: he shot it hissel'; an' Tibbie's got to dine off the bones."

"'Deed, thin, ma'am, ye're but a delicate ater to be livin' in sich a hungry part," said the peddler, as he unrolled his pack; "but here's somethin'll give ye a relish for the feast. Here's a chintz'll make ye so beautiful your own friends won't know ye! Rale rich stuff! Flowers as big as taycups! An' all for no more nor fourpence a yard!"

Tibbie knotted her knuckles together to keep down her amazement, while she glutted her eyes upon the beauties of this bargain. It was many a day since she had dreamed of such a gown as that. At sight of it, long dead memories of past fairs and dances, and youthful frolics, and blithe companions, got up and jostled each other through the old creature's brain.

"Ye'll make it twopence!" said the wily Tibbie.

"Sorra penny now undher fippence," said the peddler, beginning with dignity to roll up the stuff. "When a lady doesn't know a bargain when she sees it, why it's part of my profession to tache her at a little inconvanience."

"Fourpence, ye said!"

"Fippence," said the peddler.

"Oh, musha, musha, but ye're miserly an' hard! An' 'twas fourpence ye tould me at the first."

"If ye say another word, I'll make it sixpence," said the peddler.

Tibbie groaned, and rocked herself, with her eyes upon the chintz. The material before her was worth eighteen-pence a yard. Tibbie knew it well. It was strong and soft, and warm and silky; printed in good colors, and of the most brilliant design. Why, the ordinary peddler would not give her a calico at the price! But to part with so many five-pences cut Tibbie to the heart; and the thought of walking about Tobereevil, amidst the cobwebs and mildew, dressed out in all this finery, was like to make her crazy between horror and delight. And in the mean time, while she deliberated, the coveted stuff retreated, yard after yard, into the peddler's pack.

"I'll be biddin' a good evenin' to ye," said the peddler, shouldering his bundle.

"Stop! stop!" shrieked Tibbie, and she huddled herself away across the kitchen. She seized the poker, so that the peddler thought at first that she was going to lay it about his head; but she only poked it up the chimney, bringing down a shower of soot, and a grimy little bag which chinked as it fell among the ashes.

"Wan, two, three, four!" said Tibbie counting out her money. "Oh! my curse on you for a villain, would ye take it from me?"

The peddler put the money in his pocket, Tibbie glaring at him strangely the while, as if she had given him poison, and he had swallowed it. The peddler cut off the cloth, folded it neatly, and placed it in a roll in Tibbie's arms, where she griped it, and pinched it, so that, had it been a living thing, it certainly would have been strangled.

"Now, thin!" said the peddler, "would you be lettin' the masther know that I am here?"

"The masther?"

"Misther Finiston hissel'."

"Ah, thin, young man, ye come a long piece out o' yer way to get yer head broke."

"Anan?" said the peddler.

"Wid the poker, or the hind leg o' a chair," went on Tibbie. "There's no luck in axin' for a sight o' Simon's money."

"But I want to show him mine," said the peddler.

"Is it laughin' at him ye are?"

"Sorra laugh in the matter. If so be he has any thin' to sell, — old coats, or gownds, or curtains, or jewellery, — why it's mesel' will give the best price for the goods."

"Sit down, thin, good man, an' wait a bit; for that's a quare different tune ye're whistlin' now. He's out gleanin'; but he'll be in for his dinner by'n bye"

"'Gleanin'?" asked the peddler.

"Pickin' what he can get," returned Tibbie. "Sticks for the fire, an' wisps o' hay; wool out o' the hedges', an' odd praties an' turnips out o' the rigs."

The peddler stared. "It amuses the ould sowl, I suppose," he said.

"Oh, ay!" said Tibbie, with a whine, "an' helps to keep the roof over his head, the crature!"

There was silence upon this, during which the black-beetles came a journey across the kitchen flags, and walked playfully over the peddler's boots; while Tibbie went on with her cooking, making the woodcock spin giddily from its string as she basted it before the fire. She was considering whether the peddler would buy the rags and bones which she had been storing in the cellar for the past ten years.

By and by a sound was heard from above; and Tibbie left off torturing the woodcock, and placed him on a dish. A slice of bread and a glass of water were added on a tray; and then the miser's dinner was carried up stairs.

"Ye may wait, my man," said Tibbie, coming back; and, when the tray had come down again, she ushered the peddler into the presence of her master.

He was sitting, all alive with expectation, in the dreary state of his dilapidated dining-room, a little leaner, more wrinkled, more surly, and fretful-looking than on the day when he had scared Miss Martha out of his presence. In a corner of the room lay a small heap of the spoils which he had gleaned off the country since the morning.

"Take them away, Tibbie, take them away," he said, waving his hand towards the meagre pile, "and be careful about picking up the straws. They have cost me a hard day's work, good woman; and see that you do not lose the fruits of your master's toil. You perceive, young man, we will have no waste here; and I am glad to learn that you are one of those who count nothing too old or decayed to be of use. I am told that you are anxious to do a little business with me; and, that being so, we will proceed up stairs."

The miser's nose was long, thin, and almost transparent; and, as he spoke, he sat sharpening the end of it — as it seemed to the looker-on — with a many-colored rag, which had once been a pocket-handkerchief.

The peddler stood, hat in hand, a little

in the shadow thrown by the strong red sunset and the heavy oaken framework of the window. His attitude was respectful; but there was a strange look of loathing mixed with fear in his eyes, which now fixed themselves, as if fascinated, on the face of the miser, and now roved about the room.

"You will see a great house," said the miser, while he shuffled across the hall, looking nervously over his shoulder, as the keys jingled in his hand, — "a dilapidated house, which the owner has no means of repairing. What it costs me, young man, to keep the holes in the windows stopped, so as to shut out the wind, and prevent the roof flying off on a stormy night, — why, it makes me what I am," he said, flapping his patched garment ostentatiously. "It makes me what I am."

The first Finiston of Tobereevil, the man who had brought the blight upon his race, had had in his princely days a grand idea about the planning of a dwelling. The staircase was wide enough for eight men to ascend its black steps abreast. Inky faces of demons and satyrs grinned from among vine-leaves in the carvings of the balustrades. Black marble nymphs twined their arms and their hair round pillars on the landing, and lost themselves amid foliage and shadows. Formerly, all the sinister effect of this blackness had been carried off by the ruddy velvet hangings which had glowed between the arches, and the deeply-stained windows which had loaded every ray of sunlight with a special flush of color. Flora and Bacchus had crowned themselves in the splendors of the illuminated glass, making the inner air warm with the reflection of their frolics. Their wreathed attendants had chased each other laughingly under the lower arches of the side-lights. Now Flora's azure robe still fluttered against the sun, and her feet still twinkled among clouds and roses; but her fair round throat had become a spike of ragged glass, and the sky looked in rudely where her face had used to smile. Bacchus had had his lower limbs completely shivered away, and seemed to soar out of an intrusive bush of ivy. As the miser crept feebly up the staircase the scarlet midsummer sunset had assaulted all the colors in the window, flinging fire to right and left, and streaming triumphantly through the rents in the glass. The black nymphs were all burning as they clung round their pillars, each like an Indian widow upon her pyre.

From left and right of this landing another staircase led, one to each wing of the house. Simon turned to the left, and brought the peddler along galleries and down passages, and up more stairs, till he reached a low-roofed lobby, where tall black presses were stationed like goblins in the mouldy twilight. To the locks of these he fitted one after another of his rusty keys, seeking for valuables which the peddler was to buy of him. And meantime the peddler had leisure to observe how the roof was broken in above the spot where they stood, and how the walls and the ceiling and the presses and the floor were all stained with rain-marks, as if the rain had poured in there many winters through.

"You perceive that we have got an enemy here," said the miser, with a dreary laugh. "But it will be a long time yet before he makes his way down to the lower rooms. We have damp down stairs, plenty of damp; but never a pouring stream like this. It will suit me well to get rid of this property before next winter comes round."

The property was dragged out, and proved to be some faded garments, stained with rain, and eaten up with mildew. They were shrunk and discolored, past all recognition of shape or hue. The mice had dined off them at many a pinch, and the moths had made pasture of them for years. That one fine lady of Tobereevil, while sweeping her satin skirts down the sumptuous staircase below, and counting herself the first of a race of queens, had little thought that her faded finery would be thus preserved in the family, and bargained over by her descendants, after she and her expectations had long melted into the churchyard mould. Yet there it lay, exposed in its ghastly uncleanness; and yet this peddler was to purchase it, and take it forth into the world.

The peddler stood in a recess between two of the presses, and close to his head there was a tiny window. Through this loophole he could see far over the country. He could see a large portion of the estate of Tobereevil, a few hovels, a few sickly wreaths of smoke, vast rich tracks of uncultivated land, melancholy moors, and the strong, brilliant woods. The whole was a picture of neglected land, rich in beauty and glowing with promise, but with the shadow of the curse distinct upon its face, amidst all the splendors of the midsummer sunset. The peddler gazed long, as if he had forgotten his bargain, and that lively sauciness which was his business expression did not find its way through the bitterness on his face.

"You will understand that I expect a

good price for these articles," said the miser's voice, recalling him to business. "They are rich and fine, and of most costly materials. They will bear cleaning, dyeing, remodelling, patching, — ah! there is no end to the benefits which the owner will find in them."

The peddler turned round, and saw the figure of the old man bending and moving as he shook out, straightened, folded, and flaunted his gaudy and unseemly rags, and turning from the dreary landscape, and meeting this more dismal and ludicrous picture, a look of horror and disgust burned gradually in the peddler's gaze.

"Name your price, and don't keep me in suspense," said the miser irritably, and suddenly raised his greedy eyes, and peered into the peddler's face. Then, as if he could hear no more, and with a glance of terror, the peddler raised both his arms hurriedly, but with nothing violent in his touch; turned from him without a word, and fled along the lobby, past the goblin presses, and down the staircase, and to left and to right, mistaking his way, and finding it again, escaping at last out of the door, and away into the Woods of Tobereevil.

"Stop thief, stop thief!" shrieked Simon, pattering after him a little way; then coming back to see that nothing had been taken, and then following again with his cry, unconvinced, "Stop thie—ief!" And Tibbie at last caught the sound in her dungeon underground, and came running and stumbling up stairs; but when the two old creatures met, panting and vociferating in the hall, they were obliged to declare to each other that the peddler had vanished, and that he was the devil, a gypsy, or a thief at least.

Yet, after this, they found his pack lying untouched in the dining-room, together with the money which Tibbie had paid him for her dress; and, in wrangling over the contents of the bundle, they had ample occupation for the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER XIII.

TROUBLED IN HER MIND.

It was a moment of some excitement to May when she climbed into the great travelling-carriage of the Archbolds, and was taken from the gate of Monasterlea. Miss Martha inspected her departure with pride.

"I have done my best to turn her out like a gentlewoman," thought that kindly spinster, "and, let them have whom they may, they can never see a sweeter face at their board. Ah, deary me! why does Paul not come home while she is looking like that?"

And Miss Martha returned to her lonely parlor to follow out the train of this idea, with her knitting in her lap, her spectacles on her nose, and her mouth at a reflective angle. She had been busy as a bee for the past few days; but now the delicate laces were all cleared and pressed, the fair muslin gowns were all folded, the little knots and rosettes of gay ribbons were all stitched in their places, the excitement of trunk-packing had come to an end, and the humdrum knitting had returned to its place between Miss Martha's fingers. Her child was gone; but, though Monasterlea might be sleepier and lonelier than ever, Miss Martha was neither sleepy nor lonely. She was accustomed to live out a great deal of life within her twenty-four hours; and she could live it out as well in her silent parlor, over a silent occupation, as though she had been haranguing a multitude, or ploughing the rustiest field on Mr. Finiston's estate. It was a gift that she had got in the order of charity, this unflagging vitality, which would not be unoccupied. It had lit a comfortable hearth in this ruin surrounding her, it managed her farm, made a pride of her meadow-grass, drew beauty and fatness from her garden and dairy, and made a pleasant proverb of her housekeeping. When constrained to be quiet, she could employ her energy in planning good things for other people. There were many within her reach who were worthy of a thought, and very many more who were in need of it; and, when all those were reckoned, there was not found one who was not infinitely the better when the fruit of such remembrance was dropped, ripe and unexpected, into his lap. Was there thirst or hunger or nakedness or repining hiding itself in anguish in the holes of the land? The trouble was a lion, and Miss Martha was but a mouse, — but a mouse who never left off gnawing at the nets and the chains.

On the present occasion Miss Martha was thinking about Paul. She could not tell why, but she had thought a great deal about the young man lately. For the past few days he had scarcely for a moment been absent from her mind. She had dreamed about him every night, and she had talked about little else every day. This was the more remarkable, as a new event ought to have sent all her ideas in the di-

rection of Camlough. Miss Martha was fully aware of the important step that was taken when an attractive young girl like May was sent to establish a friendly footing in a house like that of the Archbolds, where she should be admired, and coveted, and taught the ways of the world. Miss Martha's pride on this point knew no bounds. A stray duke might find his way to Camlough, and might want to place his coronet on May's simple brow. Well, and was it for her own desolation upon the consummation of such an event that Miss Martha could fret over her knitting? Was it for her own sake that she cherished so fierce an enmity towards that imaginary duke? No, there was nothing about that: it was Paul who would be defrauded, Paul who would be wronged. Miss Martha, I have hinted, was a faithful soul; and she had accepted Paul Finiston as the son of her heart. Whilst his mother had lived, he had been nothing to her; but his mother was dead, and he was second with her now; and Miss Martha's second was far better than very many people's first. It was an object of her life to bring him home from his wandering, to pet him, to worship him, to watch over his interests, and constrain fortune, if it might be, to relinquish her old grudge against his family, and to shower favors for the future upon this innocent head. And in order that her heart might not be divided, she would make her first and her second into one precious whole; so that one could not hurt the other, whilst she herself must be just to both. Thus best would she pay her debt to the dead Elizabeth. Yet here, and amid these day-dreams, was May, with all her sweetness, whirled away into the chances of the world, and Paul beyond seas, and that imaginary duke coming post-haste to Camlough. So Miss Martha might have guessed very well how for the past few days she had been thinking so incessantly of Paul. Now, when she was alone, she drew his last letter from the pocket of her apron, and spread it upon her knees, and read it many times. There was not one word in the whole about coming home.

In the mean time May had passed over the rim of the Golden Mountain, and forgotten her own identity in marvelling at the beauty of the world. This midsummer eve seemed like to be the first of a new era in her life. The oxen planted their feet on the steep pavement, the carriage slid slowly from brae to brae, and from hillock to hillock, moors, fens, and lakes shimmered and burned in the sun, and shifted with a magical intermingling of lines and hues, floating off in flecks of blue and silver, and amethyst and amber, to become mere pencillings of tinted glory in the distance. In the midst of all this flush of nature, on went May like a queen of summer upon a royal progress, with golden weeds brushing her cheeks, and crimson berries dropping ripe into her hands, till the castle appeared in sight, and then a little accident occurred.

A shrill wailing sound had been for some minutes coming from a distance towards the carriage.

Accustomed to the strange cries of birds and shepherds, May did not mind it; neither did the coachman nor the drivers of the oxen. At last it arose out of a bush above their heads.

"Aye — aye — aye — aye — aye!"

This was a human voice, and, moreover, there was a white pocket-handkerchief waving madly from the point of a very long umbrella. Yet no human being was to be seen.

"It's a banshee!" murmured one of the men who led the oxen. "Go on, ye baste!" he said, whacking the animals in trepidation.

"Ye idiot! don't ye see it's a lady in disthress!" thundered down one of the coachmen from his perch upon the box.

A figure had appeared upon the bank above, looming largely against the sky. It was dressed in a long, dark gown, a scarlet shawl, and a white kerchief over the head and under the chin. The face was long and fat, and suffering from recent sunburn. The arms were waved with a tragic appeal towards the travellers.

"It's Mrs. Lee, a lady from the castle, miss," said the coachman, touching his hat to May. "It's likely she wants a sate in the carriage. Lost herself, I suppose, she has. Ye've no objections, miss? Yes ma'am, comin', ma'am. Lane on me ma'am! Oh, begorra, you'll have to come an' help us, Darby! Press yer weight betune the two of uz, ma'am! it'll balance, betther. Now, sl—ither down, ma'am and ye'll come safe to the bottom!" And the tall, stout lady was fairly dragged down the sandstone cliff, and deposited panting on the road.

She looked helpless, travel-soiled, and weary. Tears and dust were mingled in her eyes.

"My dear ma'am," she said piteously to May, "I beg your pardon, but I am obliged to intrude."

"Not at all," said May. "I shall be glad of a companion."

"Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

gasped Mrs. Lee all round, as the men once more put their hands under her elbows, and hoisted her respectfully into the carriage.

"A-a-ah!" she groaned, sinking back into the seat, and sitting upon May, and unfurling a large umbrella against the sun. "My dear ma'am, I am exceedingly obliged to you. We cannot be introduced till we get to the castle. You are particular in these countries, and that is quite proper; but, in the mean time, might we not have a little conversation?"

"I should be very glad of it," said May.

"A-ah!" groaned Mrs. Lee again. "If you had been lost on the hills ever since breakfast-time this morning you would not be a very entertaining companion. You would be hungry and tired, and in a bad humor, like me."

Mrs. Lee's long, smooth face was chiefly expressive of softness and feebleness, and her great brown eyes were full of meek and irritating patience. She had a complaining voice; and her words fell out of her mouth as if the wires that managed her speaking were out of order. She had come from America; but it was not very clear to what country she belonged, as she had neither the smartness of an American, the elegance of an Englishwoman, nor yet the liveliness and humor of an Irishwoman. She was not exactly coarse or vulgar, but she was heavy and unrefined. Her accent was of no nation, and her manners were peculiarly her own. She had been heard to address Sir John as "My dear ma'am." It seemed odd that this lady should be a guest at Camlough; but she was Christopher's mother, and this was Katherine's doing.

May was naturally wondering what could have brought this good lady so high up on the hills, alone, and without her bonnet. Her figure did not seem suited to climbing or jumping; yet, to enjoy solitude on the braes of Camlough, climbing and jumping were indispensable accomplishments.

"You will be quite surprised at finding me here," said Mrs. Lee, answering her thought, "but, my dear ma'am, a troubled mind will not let a person rest. It walks one about. It gets one into scrapes. What I would give for leave to sit and rest myself a whole long day, my dear ma'am, — I could not describe it to you!"

May murmured something to the effect that she was sorry to learn that Mrs. Lee was troubled in her mind.

"My dear ma'am," said Mrs. Lee, "troubled is no name for it. Tortured is a more natural expression."

This was said with such earnestness, and with such a face of distress, that May became sympathizing, and looked so.

"A-ah! Tortured is the word. And there has been no one to confide in here. The truth is, I am afraid of her ladyship; and besides, how could I speak to her on such a subject? I have already appealed to the girl herself; but she is as hard as flint, and as wicked as a witch. And Christopher is mad and blind. My dear ma'am, my son is being ruined before my eyes."

May at this point got a lively fear that the lady beside her was a little more than troubled in her mind. A marriage with the beautiful and wealthy Katherine seemed the strangest disguise in which ruin could attack a young man.

"I hope you are mistaken," she said.

"Well, well! This is no place for entering into particulars," Mrs. Lee said, waving her umbrella towards the coachman. "Another time I will pour out my troubles to you."

Here the carriage swept round before the castle entrance, and May had hardly time to protest that she was the very worst person in the world for a *confidante*. Figures were scattered on the lawn, watching for the travellers. Sir John welcomed May very kindly as his special guest; Lady Archbold gave her the outside of her cheek and the tips of her fingers, and Katherine embraced her. The greetings were made in the midst of laughter. Scouts had been sent to the hills in search of Mrs. Lee.

"Go away, young man," said that lady to the footman; "I will have my own son to help me out."

Christopher stepped forth with a good enough grace, blushing, smiling, and knitting his brows. He was fond of his mother, and anxious to be good to her; but she was apt to try his patience before strangers.

"Why do you go roving about the hills like a gypsy, mother?" he said deprecatingly, as she leaned on his shoulder, and heaved herself slowly to the ground.

"Why?" she said turning upon him with meek wrath. "To keep you from harm if I can; but it seems I might as well stay at home."

"Quite as well," said Christopher, with angry eyes, and then laughed foolishly, and told his mother to go in and dress; that she was a dear old goose, and made great mistakes.

CHAPTER XIV.

PAUL IS A COWARD.

When the peddler fled from Tobereevil, he struck off across an outskirt of the woods, and got up among the hills. When he had walked for half an hour, and while the sun was still red in the sky, he reached a purple terrace of the mountain on which lay a lonely lake. Here he flung himself down to draw breath, and to gaze backward upon the lower world. He leaned over the edge of the lake to drink from his hand, and started as his own face met his eyes looking at him from the placid water.

"What nonsense this is!" he said, and immediately began pulling off his shock of black hair, his large bushy beard, and his heavy dark eyebrows. He dipped his face and head in the water, and rubbed both severely with a large pocket-handkerchief; after which divestment and ablution the peddler had disappeared, and a gentleman had taken his place.

This gentleman had light-brown hair and mustache, with very dark eyes and skin. His nose was large, his forehead broad, and with already some nervous lines upon it; his mouth sensitive but firm. It was a face that was sure to be called handsome because noble and pleasing; yet if this were manly beauty, it was that of the boldest and least regular type.

For a few minutes he looked pale and languid, like one who had undergone great fatigue or mental trouble; but by and by he started up, muttering, —

"I am Paul Finiston; and I had a right to come here; and I go away without harming any one."

And, as if re-assured by this declaration, his face brightened, and he set off to ascend the mountain sturdily.

Paul Finiston had come a long way across the world, attracted by his uncle's advertisement. It had found him settled down in a distant country, with employment in his hands, and a good prospect for life before him. An old friend of his father had met with him, taken him into his business, promised him a partnership. Paul had thankfully accepted the good luck thrust in his way, had applied himself to work, and had striven to forget home in the excitement of making a fortune. It was a dream of his to forget that he was a Finiston of Tobereevil, to acquire the means of livelihood by labor of his own, and, this done, to go home in search of something he had left behind, and could not manage to do all his life without. How diligently he had worked, and with what fair hopes, and how, meanwhile, he had been teased and haunted, it is better to let him tell with his own lips by and by. That he was a wayward, fanciful, and passionate nature, certain rough notes in a little pocket-book could tell. It might also be gathered from these jottings that there was a sort of woman-like twist about his heart and brains in spite of his masculine energy and bearing, — something which made him illogical, tender, and uncertain in his moods. With a little more generosity, nature had made him a poet; with a little less, a more contented man.

The advertisement had found him pursuing his way steadily. It had shaken his purpose with a great shock, and had brought him face to face with the longings which had been tempting him to give up his projected exile of years. Here was a good reason for going home at once: his uncle, who was so rich, and whose heir he must be, desired his return without a moment's delay. Even Paul's matter-of-fact employer had looked upon his obedience as a thing of course. "There is no doubt at all," he said regretfully, "that a bird in the hand is worth a good many in the bush. A fortune in prospect, and in exile, is pretty good; but a fortune at home and ready-made is better." So Paul had come home, not dragged by a love of gain, but by a hungry heart.

By the time he had landed in Ireland, however, the idea of presenting himself to the miser of Tobereevil had grown so repulsive to his mind, that he had almost stepped from one ship to another, and fled back whence he came; and only that that hunger of the heart was unappeased within him, his employer must have received him back ere he had ceased to be missed.

It was in the midst of a confusion of attraction and repulsion which seized on him when he thought of the land of his inheritance, that he gave way to that freak of jealous, inquisitive humor, which brought a peddler over the mountains to the gate of Monasterlea. He would see these women, and he would know if they remembered him. May might be married: he would hear all about it. May might be cold, unamiable, and forgetful: he would see it at a glance. And if either of these speculations proved the right one, then he would go back unknown to the other side of the world. In that case, he would not trust himself to the tortures of Tobereevil. The miser might have his gold all buried in his coffin. if he

pleased; he might will his estate to be kept as a vast burial-ground for his remains, and the mansion of Tobereevil a monument over his bones; he, Paul Finiston, would at least be rid of haunting terrors and worrying superstitions for the remainder of his life. But if May should be found a maiden, still kind, still mindful, with still in her heart all that anxiety for his welfare which had been painted in her face on that morning when she had stretched out her hands to him from the quay, why then Paul would be a man, and brave the curse of Tobereevil.

Well, he had gone happy from Monasterlea. He had seen May tender, true, and worthy to be loved. He would shelter himself under her womanhood, and defy the curse. His fears had become phantoms. His hopes had taken a lovely form of flesh and blood. He walked towards Tobereevil a royal peddler, ready to bestow gifts on all whom he might meet; but the long, foul shadow of Tobereevil in the evening sun had been too much for Paul Finiston. The old superstition, the old unaccountable terror that had made him feel himself a murderer when he confronted the miser even in fancy, had fallen upon him with tenfold force, now that he had looked on him in the flesh. May and his good genius were forgotten. The spirit of evil had taken hold of him again. Let him fly from this blight, this temptation, this curse! Let him return to his honest work beyond the sea!

So, having spent a little his passion in the wood and on the hills, and rested a while by the margin of the lake, he set off to cross the mountains on his way back to Australia.

Soon the heat of his eagerness to be gone had abated, and he paused as he went, to look behind and beneath him. The glow of the evening was still ruddy on the land. A golden film had blurred the line of meeting between sky and sea. Higher, long bars of weightier gold had shot from behind the hills, and laid themselves level along the west, as if barring the gate through which the sun had passed. The hills on the horizon had wrapped themselves in violet, and seemed to nestle close against the warmth of the sky. The mid-landscape rose towards the light in every tint of yellow-green and flame-color and tawny-brown, and fell under the shadows, saddened with every hue of gray and olive and brown-purple. Here and there a lake or a fragment of a streamlet glanced upward, like a flame out of the depths of a hollow. Here and there a farmhouse or a cabin stood wrapped in a luminous haze of its own smoke; and the woods curled out and wreathed themselves over all the foreground,— one half amber and ruddy, fused in the burning glamor of the hour; the other buried under the sombre purple of their own dense shade.

The beauty of the country smote him, like a blow from a friend. All this might be his; all this barren, wasted loveliness might be nurtured into teeming strength. He might do it, with his strong will and arm, helped by the meaner but mightier power that lay rotting and rusting among guineas and title-deeds in the miser's safe. How strange it was that Heaven's work should be defaced by the wickedness of one poor dotard! How strange that Paul Finiston, who panted to give renewed life to a crowd of his fellow-creatures, should have to fly from the fear of hurting an old man!

He went more slowly now, onward and upward, higher and higher, into the upper mountains. The plovers cried, and whirred close to him, as they descended to their nests among the heather. A few faint echoes came floating up from the valleys, too few and too faint to bring a throb of human life into the lonely stillness; yet there, and quite suddenly, Paul came face to face with a fellow-creature.

It was Con the fool; and he was sitting on the heath, one leg gathered up in an attitude of pain, the other extended at full length, the foot quivering and swollen. He grasped the heather with both hands as he leaned on them. He made no complaint; but the tears rolled heavily from his round black eyes, and there was a tragic look upon his broad white face.

"Halloo!" cried Paul, "what's the matter, my good fellow?"

"Con's foot killed," answered the idiot. "Con walk no more. Con die, too, on the mountains."

"Die?" said Paul, "nothing of the kind. Come, now, where am I to carry you to?"

By this time he had seated the idiot on his back.

"Nan!" cried the idiot.

"Where am I to find Nan?" asked Paul, in a puzzle. He made two steps forward, but seemingly in the wrong direction; for the fool began to cry again.

"This way, then," said Paul, and took another course. The idiot laughed, and clapped him on the back.

How long he might have strayed over the hills, seeking the way to Con's friends by means of such signs, we need not guess. Chance sent a guide to his aid.

Coming up the hill he saw a figure, wending slowly, and with the help of a stick,

up the slippery braes. It was a little woman dressed in a long, gray cloak which had seen many winters, a scarlet handkerchief on her head, her face brown as a nut, and her hair lying like a white silk fringe along her wrinkled brow.

"God save yer honor!" cried she cheerily. "Who'd think to meet a gintleman on the mountains, — let alone wid a poor omadhaun on his back!"

"Are you Nan?" asked Paul.

"Nan? Ochone! is it Nan Kearney ye mane? Then it's fifty long years since I was the cut o' Nan Kearney!"

"I never saw Nan, and how am I to know?" said Paul. "I'm a stranger here, and I found this poor fellow lying hurt on the heath. He calls out for Nan."

"Nan and Bid!" cried Con joyfully, and with a friendly gaze at the old woman.

"Oh, ay! thrust him for a fool; but he knows his own friends," said the new-comer. "I'm Bid, an' I know the way to Nan's: an' if it'd be a thing, young gintleman, that ye would carry him that far, — why it's the Lord himsel' that'll give ye a lift for it in yer need!"

Paul laughed, and forgot that he was the miser's heir, and strode on contentedly with the fool on his back, and the old woman for his guide. They struck out on a path which leaned slantwise through a pass between two peaks of a cloven hill; and, following along this, they heard a soft girlish voice saying, somewhere near, —

"Come back, now, Patsie! Don't go down there, or ould Simon'll catch ye!"

"Nan!" cried the fool in a tone of delight.

And then they turned the corner of a rock, and came upon a rustic scene.

CHAPTER XV.

BID AND THE HOUSE-MOTHER.

It was a scene like one of Mulready's pictures. Against the tall red sandstone cliff, a cabin had been propped. It hung clinging to and slipping from this wall at its back, with its slanting thatch wreathed with moss and brilliant weeds, its gables awry, its windows, one up and one down, its chimney crowned with an old upturned basket, its smoke hovering upward, its door low and dark, but gilt round with the sunglare like the gate of a royal palace. A slim young girl sat leaning against the wall, weaving a basket, with a pile of rods at her feet. She had a fair ruddy look of innocence and health, short, saucy features, and large blue eyes. Her loose auburn locks hung in a heap of bronzed flakes upon her neck. The sun had browned her cheeks, her hands, and her naked feet, which were prettily crossed before her, where she sat; but her temples, and her throat, and her little ears were white. Two mahogany-colored urchins with curly black hair were playing with the rods that lay beside her. Another, younger, swarthier, and sturdier, had wandered to a distance, and looked back over his shoulder with audacity in his arch black eyes. All these wild creatures were clothed in dark red flannel, the girl with a white kerchief across the bosom. In the doorway a woman was spinning wool. All round about them spread the red and purple mountains with their rich tawny patches, where the grass and tender herbage had broken out through the heath. Below lay the sea, and, in the distance, the white gleam of a village on the coast. And over all, and through all, glowed that after-glare of the sunset, upon red cliffs, ripe cheeks, cabin, heath, and ocean.

The repose of this scene was disturbed by the new-comers. The girl sprang to her feet, spilling her rods; the children shrieked, and clapped their hands in delight at seeing Con perched on another man's back; the spinning woman ran out from under the shadow of the doorway. There they were laughing, gesticulating, making themselves more picturesque at every turn, till they found that Con was hurt. Then there was a sudden hush, then little cries, and grieved faces, and the scene wore an air of vivid tragedy, till they found that he was not much injured after all. Then the laughter broke out again. The fool was placed reclining on a couch of dried heather, clapped on the shoulder, cheered, pitied, and purred over. Nan fetched a pitcher of water, and bathed and bandaged the hurt foot.

"Is he her brother?" asked Paul of the spinning woman, whom Bid had introduced as Mrs. Kearney, the house-mother of this homestead.

"Her brother, is it? No, no, he's no son o' mine. But sure if he isn't what's the differ? He comes, an' he goes. We'd be lonesome an' quare without the fool. As for Nan, he's just like one o' the babbies till her. An' he'd kiss the groun' she walks!"

"See that now!" said Bid, striking in, "how fools does flourish! Gets purty girls to bathe their feet, an' gintlemen to carry them on their shouldhers."

"And kind-hearted women to lead them back to their friends when they are astray," said Paul, smiling.

"Och, och! sure, I'm only a poor beggar!" said Bid, tossing her head sadly.

"Beggar!" said the house-mother indignantly, as if an insult had been flung at her own head. "Thin, Bid, have sinse! Who calls her a beggar, I'd be glad to know, yer honor? If ye seen the purty house she had till Simon put his clutches on it, an' threwn her out upon the road! An' if ye seen the fine man she had for a son, afore he died of the cold he caught in the snow that black night. Don't cry, Bid! Keep up yer heart, alanna! Sure I'm not goin' to let ye make little o' yoursel' to sthrangers that might believe ye! Whiles ye pay us visits, an' it rises our hearts to see ye, an' whiles ye stay away, an' we're lonesome till ye come roun'. That's the way it is wid her, yer honor: she lives among the people; but there's nobody in the whole counthry that would dar' call Bid a beggar but hersel'!"

"God love ye, Mary Kearney!" said Bid, drying her eyes, and throwing up her head, "an' now I'll have my say. Ye hear that woman, yer honor," she said, addressing herself to Paul. "An' ye'd think maybe she was that well to live that she had nothing to do but hand away her creelfuls o' potatoes, an' her mugfuls o' male to every hungry mouth that comes lookin' a bit through the hills. An' ye don't know that her good man is dead, an' her hunted out o' the nate little houseen that he built wid his own hands. Ye don't know what a waste bitteen o' land this was whin she got it, an' how her an' her soft gossoons hammered it wid their spades till they dug the little fields up out o' the rock. An' maybe ye don't know, but she has ten childher till her share, an' nine o' them younger nor Nan; all like steps o' stairs. An' her spinnin', an' diggin', an' plantin', an' sowin', an' the agint holdin' a whip over her head all the time! Ye didn't know her afore, yer honor, but maybe ye'll know her now. Look at her there! Mary Kearney, that always has a corner for thim that's worse off nor hersel'!"

Bid gesticulated with her hand, as if she were denouncing Mary Kearney. She stopped, out of breath; and the two women looked away from each other, and cried in a sort of passion over each other's troubles, till Nan's clear voice came ringing between them, like the sound of a pleasant bell across the storm.

"Ye're all thankin' an' praisin' other," said she, blithely, "but here's a poor boy that wants to be praisin' somebody too. Con wants to thank the gintleman that carried him when his foot wouldn't walk. May the Lord love yer honor, an' lift ye clane over yer throubles, if ye have any!"

She had risen up from her position on her knees beside Con, and stood, comely and tender, looking from Con to Paul, and from Paul to Con. Paul left the other women to calm themselves, and came forward to offer his further good-will to the fool.

"He's just like to love ye for it his whole life long!" said Nan. But as Paul drew nearer to her, Con's face changed. He threw one arm round Nan's little sunburnt feet, and waived Paul backward with the other.

"Don't mind him, yer honor," said Nan, smiling indulgently, and patting the fool's rough head with her hand. "There's whiles he's quare; an' ye'd think it's jealous he'd be," she said, blushing instantaneously all over her pretty ripe face, "an' then he don't like anybody to spake to me but hissel'. An' sure it's wicked to tease the likes o' him, an' maybe dangersome as well."

Here Mrs. Kearney stepped forward, without her tears, and invited the young gentleman to join the frugal supper of her family. Bid and she had carried out a table from the cabin, on which they had placed a huge dish of fine new potatoes, some coarse earthen platters, and some salt. "Well would it plase us to offer betther to a gintleman an' a sthranger!" said Mrs. Kearney. Paul declared that nothing could be better. And then they all sat down together in the soft purple twilight, — the heir of Tobereevil, the beggar, the fool, the house-mother, the pretty maiden, and a troop of hungry children.

By this time Paul was quite at home with the party. He humored Con by taking no notice of Nan, and giving all his attention to the elder women. He had many questions to ask, not mere idle questions, but in search of information which he felt to concern himself. He had a friendly fellow-feeling for these simple mountaineers. They and he were suffering under the weight of a common curse.

"I'm a stranger, you know," said Paul, with a blush at his own cunning; "and I want to hear something about this Simon whom you talk about. Tell me about him."

The house-mother and Bid looked at one another, as if to say, "Where can we begin?"

"'Deed, sir," said Bid, "it's but fool's work to talk o' him. He's the scourge o'

the counthry that has the curse o' him for a lan'lord; and if it wasn't that the people has some hopes o' thim that'll come afther him, it'd be well they were all dead, an' in their graves."

This was the very point that Paul wished to arrive at. He wanted to hear from their own lips what they expected from the miser's heir.

"Who is to come after him?" he said.

"He's wan Paul Finiston," began Bid.

"A bad name?" groaned the house-mother.

"Whisht wid yer nonsense!" cried the beggar woman; "sure the heart o' a man isn't in his name! He's a young man, yer honor, an' they say he's good; an' some day he'll be comin' here wid the mercy o' God in his two han's for the poor."

"How do you know that?" asked Paul.

"We're prayin' for it," said Bid pathetically; "an' we've prayed for it long. It won't give me back what I have lost when it comes; but, whiniver I look at one o' Mary's gossoons sittin' there, I think he'll live to see the good times!"

"Why don't he come home at once?" cried the house-mother passionately. "Why couldn't he come wid even a promise that'd keep us alive? What is it that makes quality so hard, I wondher? There's nobody comes here but only to tant us, an' crass us. The last that come here he was a rale fine gintleman, an' he was shootin' for his pleasure over the mountains. An' I lighted his,—that thing that the quality smokes instead o' a pipe,—I lighted it for him, an' he sat down there fornent me, an' he tould me the Irish was a lazy people, an' axed me why didn't I work; an' he faulted the ould basket up on the chimley; sure it was the best that Nan could do for it! an' he faulted the stuffin' I had put in a winda-hole to keep out the cruel blast. I could ha' tould him that I loved a bit o' glass as well as he did, an' that I had wanst a purty houseen with windas as bright as diamonds; but I sickened ower it someways, an' I hadn't a word to say. I couldn't give him an answer; I just turned on my heel, an' went in an' shut my door."

"Ay, ay!" said Bid soothingly, "we know the cut o' him; but this gintleman's none o' that sort."

"I ax his pardon," said Mary Kearney humbly, "for maybe he'd think I evened it till him; but we know he's none o' that sort."

"And what if this Paul Finiston should turn out to be one of that sort?" asked Paul.

The woman turned a startled glance upon him, and then cast a look of anguish on her children.

"Why, thin, if he do sir," she said, sighing, "thin the best frind that we had'd be somebody that'd take us out, wan by wan, an' shoot us down wid a gun!"

"Heaven forbid!" said Paul hastily; then added, "I suppose he keeps away in disgust at the whole thing."

"Oh, yer honor!" said Nan, speaking up in her fresh voice, "if the Lord had kep' away in disgust from all sinners, what'd ha' become of the world?"

"Nan, Nan!" said her mother quickly "yer tongue's too free."

"She's right," said Paul; "and I think, if he believed he could be of use, that Paul Finiston would come here."

"Do you know him? Are ye his frind?" cried three voices together.

"I know something of him," said Paul.

"You do?" cried Bid. "Oh! thin, I'll make bould to send a word till him, if yer honor'll take the charge o't."

"Willingly," said Paul: "I promise he shall surely hear your message."

"First tell him to come, for the love o' God an' the poor. It would rise cratures' hearts to hear a bit o' a promise from him, an' he might stop some harm, an' do many's the good turn. An' thin, if that doesn't touch, just tell him that if he doesn't come soon there'll be a poor fool body put stannin' in his shoes!"

"How?" asked Paul. "Who is that?"

"Yondher!" said Bid, pointing to Con, who had fallen sound asleep on the heather at Nan's feet.

"Tell me what you mean?" said Paul.

"There's wan Tibbie, an' she calls hersel' Misther Finiston's housekeeper, an' she liyes there an' houlds the grip o' him; an' she says she's Con's aunt. An' she gives out that her sisther, Con's mother, was married on Simon's brother; an' she calls Con the heir of Tobereevil. An' there's a lawyer comes here, the agint—may the curse o' the counthry"—

"Stop, Bid!" cried the house-mother.

"Ay, sure!" said Bid, "I needn't sin my soul on him. God forgive him, an' me!"

"Go on, please," said Paul.

"Well, this lawyer knows the way o' makin' wills; an' some fine mornin' Simon'll die, lavin' all he has to Con: and Tibbie and the lawyer'll have Tobereevil betune them. What would Paul Finiston say to that, yer honor?"

Paul had turned pale. "I think," said he, "that, if he wouldn't come for the first

part of your message, he would not for the second."

"But, don't ye see, it's the same thing?" cried the house-mother passionately. "O Lord! what way will it be wid the people in this counthry at all?"

"I did not say he would not come," said Paul gently.

It was now dark, with that clear darkness of the mountain world on a summer's night. The moon came floating up from the lower world, swimming in faint gold through the black-purple atmosphere. The party broke up; and the various figures moved about like pleasant shadows in the luminous twilight. The firelight began to glow through the cabin doorway. Counsels were being held about the housing of the stranger, the guest of the night. The women spread new straw in an out-house, where they all meant to sleep, leaving the cabin to his honor. Paul frustrated their intentions, however, by taking possession of the out-house with Con for a companion. Soon all was silent on the mountain-side. Paul slept soundly on his bed of straw. Once during the night he awoke. Through a breach in the wall he could see the moon still hovering over the hills. In her wake he saw a face floating, — May's face, with that look which it had worn as she clasped her black cross.

"What a coward I have been!" he said.

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. LEE INSISTS UPON TELLING HER STORY.

MAY soon found herself domesticated pleasantly enough with the inmates of the Castle of Camlough. Just at first she felt somewhat oppressed by attentions: from Lady Archbold, who prided herself on being an excellent hostess; from Sir John, who was desirous that his special guest should not find herself neglected; from Mrs. Lee, who looked upon this girl as a windfall which fate had sent to herself; from Katherine, who was resolved to dazzle and to patronize; and from Christopher, who was but bent upon pleasing his love. May accepted the treatment as quietly as though she had been used to it all her life; but once or twice she got tired of being asked if she were sure she would rather go out than remain in-doors, if she were quite sure she would not like this chair better than that sofa, and if she were very sure indeed that she would not prefer another game of chess before going to bed. It crossed her mind that things were pleasanter at home, at Monasterlea, where people came and went as they liked, without questioning or ceremony. Very soon, however, she fitted herself to the place; and the people got used to her, and gave her peace.

Mrs. Lee had taken possession of May as her own property since their first meeting on the mountain. She had chosen her a place by her own side at the dinner-table, chiefly addressed her conversation to her, and after dinner, until the moment when she, Mrs. Lee, fell asleep in her easy-chair, related to her the principal events of her life. Mrs. Lee in the drawing-room was not so alarming a person as Mrs. Lee lost on the heather; but, in a brown-velvet robe and scarlet turban, she looked sufficiently imposing. Her sad looks at her son, and her bitter looks at Katherine, caused much amusement to May, who did not pity her in the least. If a mother could not be content with a bride like Miss Archbold for her son, why a mother ought not to be encouraged in her folly.

Some days passed before the storm of Mrs. Lee's full confidence broke, as had been threatened, upon May's devoted head. She had several times seen it coming, but had taken timely shelter under the wing of some third person. Mrs. Lee required leisure and privacy for her story; and though the people of the house could hardly be said to do any thing all day, nor yet to be particularly sociable, still, in their habits within doors, there was little privacy or leisure at Camlough. May was invited to join the lovers in all their walks and rides, and it often fell to her share to feel herself one too many. She learned a trick of letting her horse lag behind the others, and of losing herself in the dingles in quest of wild strawberries. Sometimes Sir John Archbold made a fourth in the rides, and paid her old-fashioned compliments, and told her of the new improvements which he meant to make about the place, — a rustic bridge here, a plantation there; and May cheerfully studied the points of view, and faithfully gave him her opinion on these matters. But quite as often she was entirely left to her own reflections. This did not trouble her; for she had a vast love of beauty, and a turn for noting character; and the new images that crowded her own mind made a constant entertainment for her from morning till night. The lovers were an unfailing source of delight to her. Her heart leaned towards them in quite a motherly fashion. She had read about lovers, but she had never beheld

a real pair before. She followed in their wake, admiring, in her simp icity, what she conceived to be an example of the greatest happiness of life. She spent long, dreamy days, thinking over the matter, down among the lilies and sedges under the bridge, or wandering through mazy and shimmering dingles. The world was very glorious, thought May, in her maiden meditation; and human life was very beautiful, and richly blest.

Mrs. Lee and May and Katherine were all lodged in the same wing of the castle, and their windows all opened upon a great balcony. May was rather afraid to trust herself on the balcony alone, lest Mrs. Lee should loom forth and take possession of her. Mrs. Lee had a handsome sitting-room off her bedroom, and it often pleased her to spend the day in its solitude. May, a less important person, had only a pretty little dressing-room, furnished with writing-table, books, and pictures; but she, too, liked to spend an hour in her retreat. This sitting-room and this dressing-room adjoined one another, the wall between being but a partition. When Mrs. Lee heard May stirring in her nest, she was apt to leave her own and come knocking at May's door. When May heard Mrs. Lee leave her room, she was apt to fly to the balcony, and thence escape to the gardens. Upon the strength of many disappointments Mrs. Lee built a theory that the dressing-room was haunted. "My dear ma'am," she would confide to May, "I heard some one move in it quite plainly; but when I entered there was nobody to be seen!" And May would answer slyly, "Indeed, madam, I don't believe it is haunted by any thing more mischievous than myself!"

This was all very well; and, for a time, she kept the ponderous lady at a distance. The hour of her defeat was at hand, however; and one night she heard Mrs. Lee's gentle knock upon her bedroom door. For a moment May thought of making no answer, and pretending to be asleep; but "it would be quite useless," she decided the next moment, "for she would come in and wake me, I believe."

"Mrs. Lee, I am just stepping into bed," was her answer. It was certainly true; for she had put out her light, and stood in her night-dress, in the moonlight, in the middle of the floor.

"My dear Miss May," came back to her through the keyhole, "you will not object to an old woman's sitting at your bedside for an hour?"

May saw that she was conquered. She opened her door, and retreated to her bed, where Mrs. Lee followed her, and sat down before her like a nightmare. Mrs. Lee had on a large white nightcap, and even the moonlight had no power to make her look like a spirit of night or mysterious angel visitant.

"My dear," began Mrs. Lee, "I should not torment you with my complaints if I had any one else to go to for sympathy."

This was said in an accent of such real sadness that May gave up her impatience, and became attentive.

"I'm very sorry if you are in trouble, Mrs. Lee," she said.

"Thank you, my dear," said Mrs. Lee, "and truly I am in sore trouble. Love has always been a mischief-maker, they say, but young men used sometimes to take advice from their mothers. My son used, but now he will not listen to a word that I speak. My dear, I want you to say a few words to the lady."

In the earnestness of Mrs. Lee's affliction she had forgotten the formality of her usual style of address. May's patience, however, was not proof against this speech. She sat up and spoke out her mind.

"Now, Mrs. Lee, I should like to show respect to all you say; but I find it very hard to pity what you seem to feel. I think nothing could be more fitting than the match; and as for your son, I think Miss Archbold only too good for him, if there be any difference between them."

"That's what she thinks herself, I dare say," said Mrs. Lee, beginning to weep; "and I do declare I believe there is no kind-heartedness left among young women now-a-days; but if she does think so, why does she not tell him so, and send him away?"

"Send him away!" echoed May: "I don't understand you at all, Mrs. Lee."

"I see that plain enough, my dear, and I will tell you all about it. You think that Miss Archbold is going to marry my son?"

"Of course I think so," said May. "What else could I think?"

"What else, indeed? But she is not going to marry him, and she is going to ruin him for life."

"Oh, no! I could not believe it."

"That will not alter the matter at all," said Mrs. Lee crossly.

"That is true; but I mean — you know, even were she capable" — May paused. "In that case, Mrs. Lee, she would not be worth thinking of. Your son would not be ruined for life, I dare say."

"You know nothing about the matter when you say so," retorted the distressed lady. "My dear ma'am, I came here to tell you the whole story. I suppose you

have heard my son spoken of as a man of wealth?"

May admitted that she had heard him so spoken of.

"Well," said Mrs. Lee grimly, "I have three hundred a year which my husband left me. It was all he had to leave. And he said, 'The child is a boy, let him work.'"

May was silent, not daring to ask if upon the reversion of his mother's three hundred pounds a year rested Christopher's sole claim to be considered a man of wealth.

"And so he should have been brought up to work, and he would have worked," went on Mrs. Lee, "if I had not had a brother who was a rich bachelor. He was an old man, and all his great wealth had never made him happy. He had been always called a woman-hater; but when he was dying he sent for me, and he made me some confessions about his views of life. He said he believed a single life led to all sorts of folly and wickedness, and that he had been a miserable man because he had been so lonely. He had willed all his fortune to my son, on condition that he should marry before he was twenty-three. 'If a young man has any good in him,' said he, 'he has always fallen in love with some nice girl before that age. Let him marry her at once, and not wait till he has begun to think that she is not as handsome, or as clever, or as angelically tempered as he would like her to be. Most young men are prevented by want of money. He shall not be so prevented.' In this humor my brother made his will; and so, my dear ma'am, it happens that if Christopher be a married man before the last day of next September, he will be richer than most men in the kingdom. If he be not married by that time he will be poorer than any other poor young man by just this much, that he will not know how to work."

"And this is July," said May: "they ought to be getting ready for the wedding."

"There will be no wedding here," said the troubled lady.

"Oh, Mrs. Lee!"

"There is no wedding thought of, except in my son's poor bedazzled brains. I told you before, that it was this girl's amusement to lead him on to his ruin; and I tell you so again."

"But does she know the circumstances, as you have told them to me?"

"I told them to her myself seven or eight months ago. She only laughed, and said the old gentleman had made an exceedingly awkward arrangement."

"Perhaps she does not like to be tormented about the matter. She may choose to be a little mischievous; but I will not believe that she can be so wicked as you think."

"You don't know her as I know her. You have not seen her with other lovers around her, my dear. She was the centre of a crowd of them when we met her first; and she turned them off one by one, and seemed to delight in their vexation. At that time I thought Christopher would have married a sweet little girl, the daughter of his tutor in England. She was fond of him, I am sure; and though she had not a penny, he need not care for that: but this Katherine put her clear out of his head."

"Would it not be well to appeal to her father and mother?" said May, now throughly roused to comprehend the situation, and feel interested in averting this threatened danger.

"I tried that before," said Mrs. Lee gloomily, "but I might have saved my pains. I believe they are afraid to interfere with the girl. They declared politely that they never could think of influencing their daughter's affections. As if I wanted them to do so! I asked for nothing but that she should make up her mind."

May began to share in the poor lady's dismay.

"So then I should have left this place in anger," said Mrs. Lee, "only for fear of making a quarrel, and destroying any hope that might be left. If the lady would marry my son I should be thankful, though, indeed, I do not like her. My poor boy loves her, and, at all events, his fortune would be secured; but if she turns him away now, at the last moment, when he finds himself ruined and disappointed, he will fall into a despair which she with her light ways could scarcely even dream of. And things are no better to-day than they were weeks ago."

This conversation went on for some time longer; and, during the course of it, much of the heaviness and unsightliness of Mrs. Lee's outlines became softened away, and was never after visible to May's pitying eyes. These two new friends parted at last with an understanding that May should, if opportunity offered, make interest for Christopher, and plead his cause with Katherine; and, after Mrs. Lee had gone away, May lay a long time still awake, wondering over the iniquity that had just been made known to her. She found it in the end too monstrous to be believed in.

Before she went to sleep she had persuaded herself that Katherine must come forth, triumphant in honesty, from under the cloud of this suspicion which was at present hanging over her.

CHAPTER XVII.

KATHERINE SPEAKS HER MIND.

It was not long before May had an opportunity of learning Katherine's sentiments towards Christopher, as well as towards some other people and things.

One morning she was entertaining herself after her own fashion, alone, in the dingle beyond the rustic bridge over the stream. She was sitting in the shelter of a large oak, stringing the ripe rowan-berries into a long scarlet chain. So occupied she heard a rapid step, and a muttering voice coming over the little bridge, a crunching in the underwood close by, and then some one fell prone upon the moss at the foot of her tree, — the other side of the tree at which she was sitting. This was Christopher Lee, in deep distress. He had broken the stately, fan-shaped ferns by the recklessness with which he had flung himself down. His face was buried in the grass, and he was sobbing; and May could not move to go away and leave him, for the reason that he was lying upon her muslin skirt. She tried to draw it away without disturbing him, but this was impossible. He started at the movement, and looked up.

"O Mr. Lee, I am so sorry!" said May: "I could not help being here!"

He looked at her angrily for a moment, with a burning blush on his perturbed face; then he laughed uncomfortably, and begged her pardon.

"I see I have spoiled your dress," he said, "but of course I did not do it intentionally. Of course, if I had seen you I should not have come here."

"It was very unlucky," said May, "at least if you mind it; but my dress has got no harm."

"Mind it?" he said. "Of course I mind that you should have caught me lamenting, like a woman; but I trust myself to your charity: and, believe me, I have reason for grief. At least I think I have," he added slowly, passing his hand over his face. "I may be foolishly wrong; and, if so, I will come and tell you, some day soon, of my happiness. I dare not describe to you what that happiness would be like; but I think that I have reason for grief."

"I hope with all my heart that you are wrong," said May, "and that you may get your happiness. If you don't" —

"Well, if I don't?"

"I was going to say something which I had better not say," said May. "You would perhaps think me impertinent and interfering."

"Perhaps I should," said Christopher, reflecting, "and that would be unfair. I will not ask you to say another word. Good-morning, Miss Mourne: I am going a little further down the stream to fish."

And so he walked off, forgetting that, in order to fish, it is necessary to have a rod or some other apparatus for the purpose; but May was a gentle critic, and would not have laughed at him for the world.

After that May dropped her brilliant chain from the bridge, and watched it flying down the stream; then she turned away, and walked up the hilly garden towards the castle. Katherine was leaning over the balcony, alone. She had been looking down towards the dingle, and could see a long way. May mounted the balcony, and approached her, seeing that, as she drew near, Katherine looked expectant, and ready for conversation. This was unusual, but it was what May desired. She was too much disturbed by the mistakes of her neighbors to be at peace with her own thoughts. She was full of indignation against somebody. Who that somebody might be it behooved her to find out, that she might not in the zeal of her fancy make a martyr of the innocent.

"Stay here a little," said Katherine winningly, as May hesitated, not knowing whether to pass her or remain unbidden at her side; and May seated herself on the edge of the balcony, leaning back against an urn full of geraniums, folded her hands in her lap, and expected to be catechised.

"You have been walking with Mr. Lee?" said Katherine, not rudely, but with the air of one who considered she had a right to ask questions: "where have you left him?"

"He said he would go farther up the river to fish," said May demurely.

"Oh!" Katherine looked surprised and a little disappointed. She had perhaps expected some pitiful tale of her lover's desperation.

"You were walking with him some time?" she asked again, after a minute, during which she had been eying May, who sat with her dark head against the geraniums, her eyes half shut, gazing drowsily down through the sunshine to the river, the way by which Christopher had gone.

"Not walking," said May; "sitting and standing."

"Oh!" said Katherine impatiently, "and talking, of course. He was complaining to you of me all the time?"

"No," said May mischievously: "we never even mentioned your name."

"I am glad to hear it, I am sure," said

Katherine, with a mortified smile; "but I had thought it might be otherwise, knowing his habit. He is a dreadfully low-spirited young man. I am tired to death of him. I wish they would go away."

"Then, why do you not tell him so, and send him away at once?" asked May, rousing up so suddenly, and speaking with such energy that she quite startled Katherine. "You know, — you know it is you who keep him here."

May trembled as she spoke, believing that Katherine would think her interference quite outrageous; but Katherine's uneasiness all vanished at the attack. Her face kindled with smiles.

"My dear little girl," she said indulgently, "you don't know what you are saying. Lovers will not be shaken off so easily. I speak from much experience. While you, — you have never had a lover, have you?" said she, looking at May keenly.

"No, indeed!" said May hastily, and blushing a vivid blush, that wandered from her cheeks to her forehead, creeping up even among the little rings of her hair. She felt vexed with herself for blushing; for she knew of no reason why the question should annoy her: and there was Katherine looking on with amused curiosity.

"How red you turn!" said Katherine, who had never blushed, save with anger, in her life; "but you need not be ashamed. It is no reproach at all, living out of the world as you do."

"I am not ashamed," said May, "and I do not wish for a lover; but I think I can understand how a man ought to be treated by a woman whom he loves, — for whom he is willing to give up every thing in the world."

"Do you, indeed? So you have studied the matter. Come now, tell me all about it," said Katherine, looking delighted.

"He ought not to be encouraged, and then left to break his heart," said May, with another subtle quiver of excitement dyeing her cheeks. "Even if" —

"Even if what?" asked Katherine.

"Miss Archbold, I am afraid I shall make you very angry."

"No such thing," said Katherine. "I am accustomed to hear dirges about broken hearts. You are not such an original person as you think; and your enthusiasm about lovers' rights is exceedingly amusing. Go on with that speech which you were afraid would overwhelm me."

"I was going to say your conduct would be cruel to Mr. Lee, even if his fortune as well as his happiness were not so entirely at your mercy."

"So you have picked out that story already," said Katherine, looking right well pleased.

"I picked out nothing," said May indignantly.

"Well, let that be: we cannot help the truth getting about; but, my rustic maiden, how am I to blame if people will make a mess of their family arrangements? If a man chooses to lose a fortune for my sake, how am I to prevent his being so silly? If I had been his mother, I should have brought him up better. The world will talk about it, and call me a monster; but they ought rather to cry out on him for a fool. As for encouragement, how am I to judge of a lover, unless I have proper time? People ought to be capable of taking care of their own affairs; if a person sees a risk, why not turn upon his heel, and go another way? Now, if a man were to show spirit, and prove manfully rebellious" —

"Well," asked May, "what would happen then?"

"Why, then, I should think him worth a little pains. I have no mercy on a fool."

"Poor Mr. Lee!" said May. "And have all your lovers been fools, Miss Archbold?"

"All," said Katherine, "or at least I have found it easy to make them fools for the time." Katherine had warmed wonderfully with her subject as she went on: it was evidently one upon which she loved to discourse. "There is just one person," she continued, "whom I have thought worth an effort; for whose sake I could acknowledge that my heart is not made of flint. While such a one lives," here her lip curled, "I have no pity for such simpletons as Christopher Lee!"

Have you told Mr. Lee of the existence of this person?" asked May gravely, after some rueful reflections upon Christopher's hard fate.

Katherine laughed gayly. "You amusing little goody!" she said blithely, "do you think that I, also, am a fool? I have been frank enough with you; but you don't suppose it is my habit to carry my heart upon my sleeve?"

"Was this person rebellious?" asked May, rushing into another question to avoid the opportunity of declaring what she thought about Miss Archbold, and her habitual line of conduct.

"Not quite," said Katherine, with an air of mystery; "but he looked as if he could be. You will see him, I have no doubt, by and by." Here the young lady suddenly became thoroughly confidential.

"The first time we met was on board

ship, when we were returning from our travels, quite a short time ago. We were coming from Calais to Dover; and there was a storm, and people were frightened. Everybody behaved badly, including mamma and papa, who were both ill. He took care of us all; and, as I had fully expected, he made himself my devoted attendant. Towards the end of the passage the wind fell, and all the stars came out. Nothing could be more favorable to a romantic impression, and we had some hours of charming conversation. Mamma gave him our cards, and he came to us in London. There is no doubt that we shall see him here soon: he belongs to this country, and his history is quite interesting. He has been some years abroad, and is coming to visit his inheritance for the first time. He was reserved about himself, but we heard all his story from a friend of his father's. Mamma does not quite approve of him; for the old man may live a long time, and is not very reputable. Still, he must die; and the nephew will be quite a millionnaire."

"Who is this gentleman?" asked May suddenly. "What is his name?"

"Did I not mention? I thought you knew. He is Paul Finiston, handsome and proud; and they say he is a poet. One could see it in his eyes that night on board the ship. He had a way of folding his arms, and seeming to forget every thing and everybody, himself as well as the rest. This was, of course, when the danger was over, and there was nothing more to be done. It piqued my vanity at first; but I soon saw that, though a gentleman indeed, it was evident that he had not been accustomed to the ways of polite society. It is little things like this that made me say he might be inclined to be rebellious; but dear me, Miss Mourne, how white you are grown!"

"Am I?" said May; "never mind. Tell me something more about Paul Finiston."

"Do you know him?" asked Katherine sharply.

"I cannot say that," said May, "for I left my Paul Finiston in Dublin a great many years ago. I have no acquaintance with your admirer, Miss Archbold."

"*Your* Paul Finiston?" said Katherine, with a sudden elevation of her handsome chin.

"Forgive me if I speak awkwardly," said May. "I mean the Paul Finiston with whom I had some acquaintance."

This was said with dignity, and Katherine was at a loss how fitly to express her displeasure; but, fitly or unfitly, her sense of May's audacity must be made known to the offender.

"And with whom you hope to renew your acquaintance," she said bluntly, and with a look and a tone that made May again turn pale.

"Do not speak to me like that," said the young girl quickly. "I shall be glad if you will talk upon some other subject."

"But I will not drop the subject," said Katherine stormily, her eyes beginning to burn, and her face to grow dark. "I will not quit it till we understand each other perfectly. You have drawn from me a confidence."

"Pardon!" said May. "You volunteered it."

"I repeat that you drew it from me," said Katherine, "with your sentimental looks and your sympathetic speeches about lovers. Now I may as well go farther; and I warn you not to meddle between me and Paul Finiston!"

"I?" exclaimed May, springing to her feet, and standing a little off from Katherine, straight and quivering as a very shaft of fire.

"Yes, you," said Katherine. "You have thought of him as a lover. I saw it in your face when I first mentioned his name."

"It is false," said May, in a low thrilling voice. "How dare you accuse me?—you, who know nothing of me!"

But Katherine was not softened by the sight of May's honest indignation as she stood panting before her, her eyes like dark flames, her cheeks redder than the reddest roses round about.

"Your enthusiastic modesty is very pretty," sneered Katherine; "but I am not deceived by it. I see that you"—

But here May suddenly put her fingers in her ears with a childish impulse of impatience. Katherine stood speechless at finding herself treated with such utter disrespect; and, before she could find words to express her sense of the indignity, May had turned away, and fled through the window into her room.

"But I will not be treated so!" cried Katherine at the window. "Come out, Miss Mourne, for I have not done speaking to you. Or else I shall go in"—

But in the twinkling of an eye the window was locked inside, the shutters closed and barred; and May, having thus ended the battle, sat down upon the floor in the dark, and had a hearty cry.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IAY IS PROMISED A TITLE.

two girls did not meet again till ; and Katherine was then so gentle ay could scarcely believe she had ımed all the scene which had hap- in the morning. Katherine and pher seemed exceedingly good Mr. Lee looking feverishly happy, therine pensive, with a tenderness ıer which was wont to be shed about ly in her most fascinating moods. voted herself to Mrs. Lee, that lady a sense of comfort from her sym- which was touching to the young ın of a motherly heart. The even- tedious; and May was thinking ɜ must request Lady Archbold to home to Monasterlea; but at bed- therine came to her in her room.

ve come to ask pardon for my rude- the morning," she said. "You believe a word I said. It was only ıy freaks. Now, don't think of go- I shall say you cannot forgive. I insulting wretch, when my temper better of me."

Katherine sighed, and looked splen- gretful.

er mind me," said May: "what r. Lee?"

d you not to believe any thing I lay. You may safely trust Chris- nd his happiness to myself."

ooked up out of the trunk which been persistently packing. Kath- et the questioning eyes, and there eservation in her tone which con- ıore than the words might imply. ıed back a dress into her wardrobe.

if you are in earnest now," she will do any thing you like. But I to know when you are in ear-

rine turned aside, and smiled curi- Might she not as well let this little ıome? She had a serene contempt but could understand that some ıight like her for her innocence.

eve that I am in earnest when I so," she said. "Never believe me ım in a passion."

ıow it is Paul Finiston who must ıaid May; "but is he really coming ıd does he love you? or was that oo?"

rine shrugged her shoulders, and ıysterious.

cannot help these things happen- ing," she said. "I likely to be true?"

May surveyed t acknowledged to h to be true. Kather of her face for som and then began to lively manner.

"Come, let us be

"Shut up the trunks, and don't look at them for another month. We are going to have visitors, and I intend that you shall charm them. You must not be offended if I give you some lessons on your appearance. You must know that your style of dressing makes a fright of you. Now, don't look dismayed, for we will change all that. Women ought to take a pleasure in making themselves attractive. Your hair in a better style, and a little pearl powder upon your face; you blush too much, and a bright color is very vulgar; but you must not think that I mean to discourage you. On the contrary, I will turn you out quite pretty if you will let me. Only put yourself in my hands, and I promise you shall have a title before a year is past."

May listened in silence, glowing with the condemned blush, at the sudden revelation that she had been found so unpleasing. The startling promise with which Katherine finished her speech had not the desired effect in elating her spirits.

"But I do not want a title," she said slowly, "and — and" — She was well aware that Katherine was a skilful artist of the toilet. "I like a clean face, and I intend always to have one. If I am ugly as God made me, then I choose to remain ugly."

"Who said you were ugly? Not I, I am sure; but you are an obstinate, old-fashioned little goody, and I don't mind telling you so to your face. The world has gone round a few times since your respected Aunt Martha learned those very prim notions which she has so faithfully handed down to you: what in her day was propriety is now mere affectation. However, promise that you will stay with me, and I shall see about your conversion at my leisure."

"I don't mind staying," said May, "since you wish it so much; but I mean to keep to my own way of thinking all the time."

So Katherine had her way; but her plan was nevertheless not to be fulfilled.

The next morning May was up early and abroad among the flower-gardens. She had got a letter from home which should have been given to her last night. Aunt Martha bade her return without delay. "Paul

ship, when," wrote the old lady, "and he travels, I see you. At any rate, it is time coming to come home."

May was not so much astonished at the news as she would have been but for that unpleasant conversation with Miss Archbold. So he was already come to seek Katherine; and Katherine, if she had truth in her, ought to be wed to Mr. Lee within a month. What could be done for Paul, the good-natured boy who had been so kind to her in Dublin? The Paul described by Katherine had passed away from her mind, becoming but one of the crowd of those fine lovers of Miss Archbold, of whom May had been hearing much since she had come to Camlough. It was for the friend of her own memory that she was sorely vexed.

Rambling in an alley, among all the dewy rose-trees, she came upon Mr. Lee. He seemed as wretched this morning as he had looked happy last night. He was pale and worn, and his dress was out of order.

"You look as if you had been up all night!" said May.

"I have been up all night," said Christopher; "but I shall now go and dress, so as to appear as if I had had my sleep like other people."

"But what is the matter with you now? You know that you are going to be happy. I was about to congratulate you, but your face does not invite me."

"You are a true-hearted girl, and may the world never spoil you! I believe that I have made one friend here at least."

"That is true, if you mean me," said May kindly. "I would do any thing in my power to help you out of your difficulty; but I have reason to believe that you will be happy before long. Indeed, I speak the truth. I wonder if I ought to tell you" —

"You ought to tell me every thing: I have a right to know!" cried Christopher eagerly.

"Well, then, she admitted to me last night that she intended" —

"Intended what?" interrupted Christopher. "Intended to destroy me, — to spoil all my life? I saw it long ago, though I strove to shut my eyes to it. It is coming upon me now, and I deserve it."

"Why do you interrupt me?" said May, impatient in her turn. "I had good news to give you, and it seems you will not have it."

"Forgive me! but did you say good news? My head seems confused. Did you mean to say good news?"

"I understood from her," said May, "that she intends to be your wife."

"Did you?" said Christopher joyfully. "God bless you: you are a stanch friend. What a wretch I was to doubt her! What an evil-thinking coward! No doubt she has a right to be capricious if she pleases. A girl like that does not readily throw herself away; but when once she makes up her mind she is true as steel. I will not say what thoughts were in my mind when I met you; but think what a ruined creature I behold myself both in heart and in fortune, in my whole life's career, when I fancy she may be false! I deserve to suffer well for letting a doubt come near my mind. You will forgive my disorder, and I will go and trim myself. After the night I have passed I must appear like a savage."

"And you will tell me of your happiness when it is fully secured?" said May, as they parted; and she watched him stride away, big and glad, towards the house. Your six-feet men have not always giant intellects, but they often carry very tender hearts.

May did not tell Katherine the chief news of her aunt's letter. She could not speak again to Miss Archbold about Paul: she only made known her aunt's wish that she should go home; and, after no little difficulty, she was suffered to depart.

How small and odd her home looked after Camlough, and how wholesome Aunt Martha, in her clear-starched kerchief and fair white cap! Paul was coming in the evening. He had taken up his quarters in a farmer's house a couple of miles away. As May took off her bonnet at her own little dressing-table, she saw her face looking charmingly brightened up. In spite of Katherine's judgment, she was not quite a fright. What a glorious thing was joy which could thus burnish people's looks! She dared not look long enough to assure herself that beauty had actually taken possession of her face. Katherine had told her that it was all mock-modesty for a young woman not to think of her appearance; but Katherine lived in the world. Fine ladies had, perhaps, little time for self-respect; but people who were not fashionable had a great deal of leisure to perceive when they were going wrong.

So May bustled about her room, briskly putting herself and the chamber into the order which her fancy approved of. She was wiser than she had been a month ago, inasmuch as she had got a lesson in coquetry for life: she was now going to profit by the lesson. A month ago she would innocently have dressed in her prettiest to meet Paul, without thinking why she did it, or that she ought not to do it; now it could not be done without taking away her ease.

This was not Camlough, so she need not change her dress because it was evening. She kept on the thick white gown which had been fresh at breakfast-time that morning: a crimson rose was already fastened in the bosom, and that might stay; nice braids of hair were nothing unusual, and there could not be any vanity in a pair of newly-washed hands. She took her way to the parlor, as on the most ordinary occasions, such as the long, silent, uneventful summer evenings of last year; as if no sound were going to disturb the mute monotony of the hours but the click of her aunt's knitting-needles, the ticking of the clock, the distant piping of some cow-boy in the valley, the wail of a sleepy plover shuddering in at the open window, or the sound of her own voice reading a chapter of Thomas à Kempis aloud to Miss Martha in the dusk.

A great glare had flashed over the hills, and down the paths, and through the open door into the hall. As May reached the door, a long shadow and a quick step came out of the blinding red glow, and stopped at the threshold. Here, then, of course, was the visitor arrived, but not the lad whom May remembered. This was not May's merry friend; but it was Katherine's handsome lover, without a doubt.

"Mr. Finiston!" said May, giving her hand. She could not say "Paul" to this important-looking gentleman.

"Miss Mourne!" said Paul, uncovering his curls. He could not say "May" to this dignified-looking maiden; but he held the proffered hand as tightly as if he had got at last what he had been in want of all his life. And May was regarding him with sympathetic curiosity, wondering if he had heard as yet the report of Katherine's approaching marriage, and, if so, how he was bearing it. Miss Martha stepped out of the parlor, where she had been setting forth her dainties on the tea-table.

"So you have been walking over your property all day," said she to Paul. "May, you go in, and pour out the tea. I have had to do it for myself during the past three weeks. I have just got her home, and I intend to make her work. She has been living like a fine lady among the magnates of the land."

Paul thought she looked a fine lady in the finest sense of the word; excellently fit for household work like the present, as her quick hand flitted about the board, and her face smiled at him and dimpled above the teapot. It was nectar and not tea which she handed to him in a cup. She had a love-philter in her cream-ewer, this witch-maid of the mountains. Paul had, until now, held three images in his mind; now they paled away, and became faint forevermore. A little gray pelisse making purchases in Dublin; a maiden with outstretched hands upon a bridge; a gracious young gentlewoman holding parley with a peddler. These three young people had been successively his loves: now let them vanish, for their day had gone past. They could not bear comparison with this radiant tea-making creature, who could not hide her gladness that her friend had come home.

Not a word was spoken about the miser of Tobereevil. Paul shirked the subject, and the evening was given up to his own adventures abroad. The three friends sat all through the sunset, and far into the dusk, while Paul poured forth his recitals, and the audience drank in every word he spoke. The little parlor with its queer fittings seemed Paradise to the love-sick and home-sick wanderer. May sat opposite to him on a bench along the window. Two huge jars filled with roses and sheaves of lavender stood between them, making a bank of scent and color across which their eyes and words travelled. Miss Martha sat in her straight-backed arm-chair before the two, with her hands folded in her lap, no knitting being tolerable on this particular evening. The window was open to the utmost folding back of its latticed panes, and the climbing roses were dipping over the strong brown frame-work, and lying along the lintel. As Paul told his foreign adventures, he felt himself to be only some lucky Othello, or less savage Feramorz. He forgot that he was a Finiston, and the heir of Tobereevil. May's eyes glowed towards him through the fading light; and he saw in her an embodiment of all the fair hopes that had withdrawn him from the influence of his dreads and difficulties, that he might sit here at this hour in delicious peace at her side. He saw in her here present all the beauties with which his fancy had ever gifted her in absence; besides a tender paleness of cheek when thrilled by grave interest, and a spiritual abstraction of the eyes at times, out of which he gathered for himself the assurance that she could search far with him into whatever mysteries might trouble him. And yet — he delighted to discover — he could call back the merry smiles and the laughter-loving dimples.

All these satisfactions he did not note on the moment, while he lingered in the dim atmosphere of the parlor among the cloisters; but they were duly recalled and gloated over as he walked home to his farmhouse under the moonlight. While

sitting by her side, within reach of her hand and the sympathy of her face, he could not analyze the charm which had so swiftly mastered his fancy; her presence, then, had been only the nearness of a lovely and luminous soul and body, full of kindred warmth and dreams; it was after he had left her that he remembered the strong breadth of her brow with all its girlish fairness, the deep fire in her eyes, the sweet curves of her mouth, the tender firmness of her softly-moulded chin. It was then that she seemed to show herself to him in the many changeful attitudes that her character could assume, without losing a line of strength or a curve of grace. On that warm July night, Paul was deeply dipped in love. He had been parched in his exile, and he had brought himself to drink; but he was only the more athirst after this first draught.

Miss Martha and May had walked a little way with him through the field-paths towards the moor. The twilight blurred and blended the ghostly outlines of the ruins; and garden and graveyard were wreathed together in one gleaming, fragrant acre. The warm wind swept over the uncut grass, which had already the breath of hay; and the river glinted in the hollow, under its bending rows of trees. The moonlight hung like a faint silvery veil along the moorland, and the lights in distant farmhouses shone like will-o'-the wisps in a marsh. The weird watch-note of some sleepless wild-bird came floating up at intervals from the meadows. Summer beat in every pulse of the night.

Very slowly, and with few words, the three friends had sauntered along. At the gate that parted the farmlands from the open hills they touched hands, and said good-night.

"Well, my dear, and what do you think of him?" asked Aunt Martha, as the women returned homeward.

May did not answer for a few moments. She was pacing a little in advance, with her arms crossed on her breast, a trick she had from childhood when in musing humor. Two or three times her feet fell on the grass as if to the rhythm of some music that was solemn, but passing sweet.

"Eh, aunty?" she said at last. "Did you speak to me?"

"I was asking you what you thought of him, my dear."

"Don't ask me to-night, then," said May, stopping suddenly, putting her hands on her aunt's shoulders, and looking frankly and smilingly in her face: "moonlight makes people mad, you know, and I might be too enthusiastic. To-morrow we shall see him better as he is."

"Well, well, my love!" said Miss Martha, "I am not going to bother you. Let us now get into bed."

But as May went into her bedroom she thought of Katherine; and she remembered that for some hours she had forgotten to pity Paul.

CHAPTER XIX.

GREAT MISTAKES.

"AUNT MARTHA," said May the next morning, "do you remember the peddler?"

They were standing in the morning sun, looking over a sweet-brier hedge, in the direction of Paul's farmhouse. Paul had invited himself to breakfast, and breakfast was now waiting for the guest.

"Of course I remember the peddler," said Aunt Martha, — "a most civil young man, who did not know his own interests. Has he turned up again?"

"I think he has," said May. "I think Paul Finiston and he are the same. That is why we got our silk so cheap."

"Nonsense!" said Miss Martha, in great consternation.

At this moment Paul appeared coming towards them. May had said, "To-morrow we shall see him better as he is." Now she had the early glory and freshness of the morning by which to criticise him; and something of that glory and that freshness seemed reflected in the young man's bearing as he approached. He was not quite a six-foot man like Christopher Lee; but he had a better knit frame, and was of a finer build. He had in his face a look of vivid, nervous life, keen in the eyes, sensitive about the mouth, warm and impetuous in the vigorous glow under the sunburnt skin; yet with all the advantages of this happy moment for observation, May did not seem one whit more inclined to criticise than she had been the night before.

The small, dim parlor looked sweeter than ever that morning with lowered blind, and open, rose-hung sash, and filled with a tempered sun-haze which brooded over all the little oddities and grotesquenesses of its shape and adornments. The people at the table were merrier and more familiar than they had been the night before.

"Paul," said Miss Martha, "this girl sometimes dreams when she is awake, just

as some people walk about in their sleep. She dreamed this morning that she had seen you tramp the country as a peddler."

"I did so once," said Paul, in some confusion. "I meant to confess it. You will think it was a foolish trick to play upon my friends."

The shock of Miss Martha's surprise was over before now. She had been studying Paul's face, and was not unprepared for the confession when it came.

"It seems foolish enough, but I suppose you had a motive. I knew there was something wrong about that silk. You remember, May, how uneasy I was."

"Aunt Martha thought the goods were stolen," said May, laughing, "and that we should have to go to jail."

Paul looked rather foolish, but joined in the laugh. "I meant no harm," he said. "It was nothing but a freak."

"Have you quite given up business?" asked May merrily. "You had a great many pretty things unsold in your pack."

"The pack!" said Paul, recollecting. He had never thought of it since the moment when he fled frantically out of the doors of Tobereevil; away from that fear and hatred of another human creature which had made him feel for an instant as if he might be a murderer against his will. All the old haunted feeling swooped back over him as he sat there, and the sunshine seemed to vanish from the walls of the little parlor. He laid down knife and fork, and found that he could eat nothing more.

"I left the pack at Tobereevil," he said, with an effort at speaking lightly. "I quitted the place rather abruptly, and, — forgot to bring my goods."

"Did — did he recognize you?" asked Aunt Martha anxiously, seeing that some painful memory had laid hold of the young man.

"Oh, no, nothing of the kind! He received me very well. We made some bargains together. It was only that a panic seized me" —

"A panic?" said Miss Martha.

"A fit of panic to which I am subject. I had to run away." Miss Martha looked troubled, and May was in a puzzle.

"Don't let us talk of it," said Paul, with a swift return of gayety. "I have a longing to be happy a while before I settle down to look the future in the face. Humor me, dear madam. Give me a whole week"

"I will give you as many as you like," said Miss Martha, smiling, "only tell me how the gift is to be made."

"I want to see the country," said Paul. "I want to wander about, gypsy fashion, and see the beauties of the land. If you and — and" —

Paul glanced pleadingly at the bright face opposite.

"May," said the girl, smiling.

Paul's face grew radiant. "If you and May," he said, "will come with me, if you will trust yourselves to my care, I think we can have some pleasant days."

The young girl's eyes flashed delight; but Aunt Martha's cap began to bob in deprecation.

"You have never had the rheumatism, either of you," she said; but nevertheless she promised in the end to do her best to turn traveller, for the sake of these two.

So this little party set out to do what people so seldom think of doing. They contrived a tour of pleasure in their own country. They went driving leisurely along unknown roads, seeing fine sights, and arriving by sun-down at sequestered inns, in romantic byplaces of extraordinary beauty. They mounted ponies; at least two of them did, for Miss Martha would have nothing fiercer than a donkey. They climbed mountains, they sat upon wonderful crags, they floated about lakes in the blue atmosphere of enchanted days, and looked at each other through the spray of the great waterfalls. The week lengthened itself into a bewitching fortnight. And even after that time had passed, many more rosy days still dawned and set, and left them wandering.

The acquaintance of the young people ripened well during this time. Aunt Martha's donkey was an obstinate brute, and was always taking sulky fits, and lagging behind the ponies. Aunt Martha did not much fancy boating upon lakes. The young people had many a quiet hour in which to learn each other off by heart. Paul was extravagantly happy: he was companion, mentor, and often guardian, of this girl whom he loved, — loving no one else in the world; but by and by, out of the fever of his delight, he got a great new fear which outweighed all else that had ever troubled him before. He fought with it a while, vowing that he would win that thing on which he had set his heart. He was not a coward, he thought, though hard beset with shadows which threatened to darken his whole life. He had an arm fit to wield a sword, or to break stones on the highway, a heart ready to grapple with any substantial danger which might confront him; but it seemed to him that nature had given him no refuge from the plague of his imagination, had given him over to

the malice of the creatures of his bad dreams. Nature had offered no refuge, but he had found one for himself in another human soul; and now — if he should lose her?

As for May, when her observation of certain sad fits of Paul's had reminded her that he had a trouble, she found herself not so well able to pity him as she had fancied she should be. If Katherine had treated him hardly, why not let the past go to the winds? What was there about her so precious that she should be mourned for all through life? She was frivolous and foolish; but a man might not see that. Yet why not enjoy the lovely summer while it staid? Why look on the ground and sigh, and turn silent and pale, while the world was all in a glow, and full of joy on every side? She had no patience with such blindness. For her part, she believed that people ought to be happy when they could. Death and parting were sad enough when they came; but when people were well, among birds singing and flowers blooming, they deserved to be miserable if they would not try to be a little glad. One thing she would do for him, and she did it with all her might: she would avoid the slightest mention of Camlough and its belongings. And she kept this resolution so well that she made mischief. She got a nervous dread of mentioning Katherine or her lover; but Paul forced her to mention them in the end.

We have said that Paul Finiston was in the habit of talking to himself in a note-book: it could not be called a diary, for he did not write in it every day; he had been too busy in his foreign life for the enjoyment of such a regular indulgence; yet he was a man so full of fancies and moods and unrealities, that there were times when it was a relief to pour them out in black and white. He used to say to himself, that these jottings helped him along his life in the way of common sense. He could look back and laugh at his odd humors, and take measures to hinder their return; but, if nature has learned a trick, it is not easy to keep her from playing it.

Paul returned to his note-book in the little tourists' inn.

"I have been unutterably happy," he wrote, "but now I have got a new devil to torment me. It is hard to understand how a man's mind can be so changed in a few weeks. It is little more than three since my old enemy drove me back over the hills; and I went, leaving her to a future from which I excluded my own life for evermore. Now, if I were so urged, I would take all risks, and I would not go, unless furthe driven by some sign from her. The fea which were so lively when the enemy l them loose upon me are gone, and I b lieve will come near me no more. I hav only one fear; that she will give hersel away from me.

"When I loved her less I had no drea of failing to win her love. I don't think was quite as a coxcomb that I said to my self that I would try to do it within th holiday month. It seemed to me that he life must have been such a child's life, tha she must still be a child. I thought he past was a white path, and that my ow and her Aunt Martha's were the only ful sized shadows that had been cast upon it I had liberty and opportunity to woo th shy yet frank and unconscious creature and woo her I would, with all urgency an devotion. There was no one to interfer with me; for the mountains do not see mates, and, though the trees might be i love with her, they had to suffer in thei dumbness: so that, unless she hated lov and worship, and the tender care of a lif given up to her, I had a fair chance of winning her to be the angel of my life.

"So I let my love have full sway, neither checked it nor stinted it in hopes and present delights. I waked in the morning and said, 'In an hour I shall see her face, and perhaps she will give me her hand; not for life, indeed, but for a happy moment. She will dazzle me with the morning sunshine of her eyes, and her mouth will be smiling like a half-open rose. Her very gown will have the freshness of an uncrumpled rose-leaf, and I will give her roses with the dew on, which she will wear in her bosom. I shall meet her blooming in open air in the cool of the morning, delighting the early sun, and putting all the flowers to shame. At a distance I shall compare her to the wet blossoms in my hand; but when she sees me I shall discover that she has a beauty which they lack, for the rose cannot change color with that variety which is the charm of her young face. I shall live all day by her side. She will address to me her quaint remarks, and laugh at me with her laugh which makes me merry, whether I will or not. I shall say to her what I please; for nothing is too odd to amuse her, and I think she likes to be dazzled. I shall ask her questions, drawing out her opinions on this matter and that; and the answers will be so original, that it is of no use for me to speculate on what they are likely to be. I shall enjoy all this from morning till night, and then see many more of such days be-

fore me, — how many I do not care to count; for I have hopes that the future may be in itself a great treasury of them. I shall breathe in bliss with the common breath of life, because I have found a creature both soft and wise, both keen-witted and simple, to be loved apart from the world with an only and perfect love.'

"But my raptures and self-gratulations have been a little premature.

"Yesterday we sat together, she and I, in a rainbow among the mists of the great waterfall. She looked like some slim water-nymph in her limp muslin gown, all damped and clinging with the dews from those mists. I had seated her on a mossy slab of stone, with my cloak about her feet for protection from the wet. An ash-tree from the rocks above had laid some clusters of its red berries upon her shoulders, and hung more like fantastic tassels about her head. We had walked a good deal, and she was tired, showing it in that delicate paleness which sometimes spiritualizes her face, in an unusual tenderness and duskiness of the eyes. It strikes me as a sample of that egotism which is a part of myself; and I then and there for the first time thought of asking her about the events of her life. I had claimed her wonder, her sympathy, and she seemed to give it all willingly, — so willingly that I had poured out more and more of the rubbish of my own mind and experience into her ears. But I had been content to gather from her mere comments her longings, puzzles, fancies, and beliefs. I had not asked what she had seen, what she had heard, whom she had met.

"I said as we sat there, 'I have told you a great deal about myself. Will you now tell me a history of your life, — your life from the day of the gray pelisse?'

"She laughed, with a little sob of ecstatic glee at the climax of her laugh.

"'As well ask to hear the history of a squirrel or a rabbit,' she said. 'I have been as wild and as happy as one or the other, and my life has been as monotonous and uninteresting as theirs. It is years since there was an event in my life; until' —

"'Until when?' I asked eagerly, as she hesitated, hoping that she would say 'until you arrived.'

"'Until my visit to Camlough,' she said, with a slight contraction of embarrassment in her eyes, which were averted from mine as she spoke. She gazed before her with that effort not to look at me but to look at something else, which seemed to plead not to be questioned, and yet which urged me intolerably to question. A sense of unshaped trouble darkened my mind, a shadow of uneasy, incredulous bewilderment, such as I remember to have felt before, when there was a vague, cruel rumor about the failure of our bank, — our bank which held our credit between its finger and thumb.

"'Ah!' said I, with a sudden, jealous interest in the subject, 'I should like to hear of Camlough. You have never told me one word of the things that happened there. Is Miss Archbold still as beautiful as a Greek goddess? You see, I also know her. And are you and she the tenderest of friends?'

"'Miss Archbold told me of your meeting,' said she, in a hurried way; 'and I don't think we could ever be called friends,' she added, with a sudden flash of fire dancing across her sweet eyes.

"'They have quarrelled,' I thought. 'About what, about whom?' I was now all alive to hear more about Camlough.

"'Who were your company?' I asked; 'and had you a very gay time? Had you any thing or any one to interest you?'

"'Not quite a gay time, and yet I had a great deal to interest me, enough for, —

"'Enough for what?' I asked, becoming savagely impatient, yet dreading in my jealousy to hear mention of a third name.

"But she blushed ruby red, and would say nothing more. It may be that she was displeased, and thought me brutally rude; but there was something more than anger under that blush.

"'Were there any other visitors besides yourself?' I asked again.

"'There was a gentleman called Mr. Christopher Lee,' she said; and the color which paled from her face rushed back again. We had come to the point at last, — Mr. Christopher Lee.

"'A young gentleman?' I asked.

"'A young gentleman.'

"'And you and he probably became very good friends?'

"'Very good friends,' she said, drooping her eyes. 'But that does not hinder me from pitying you.'

"This was said with tender, deprecating, half-raised eyes. The waterfall seemed to gather itself out of the rocks, and fling itself into my face. Pitying me! So she not only knew my secret, but she could speak to me of it! 'And by your leave, fair lady,' I thought, 'you might have waited until I mentioned it to you.' I felt scornful, wrathful, desperate.

"'Thank you,' I said fiercely. And then I am afraid I commanded her to come home out of the wet. She looked pale and

proud, and a little wistful; but she obeyed. As I handed her over a stile, I saw the tears big in her eyes. We walked home in silence. Now I reflect upon these things, the world is as black as a cave, but my rage is gone away. Had she been safe at Monasterlea, I had disappeared during the night-time, never to excite her pity any more; but I must stay by her till I bring her home, whence I brought her. And now I am going to wait until I hear more of this Christopher Lee. My love has cut down my pride, and I have forgiven her for her pity. I have swallowed the tender insult, and overlooked the gentle boldness.

"I will cling to her hand till another comes to claim it; then I shall go away."

CHAPTER XX.

THE END OF CHRISTOPHER'S ROMANCE.

PAUL wrote later, "I was reading to her aloud in a safe green refuge which we had sought out of the heat. I had chosen a volume of very sweet, old-fashioned poetry, which treats of the passion of love with more delicacy, and not less fervor, than some of our modern poets think well to use. We stopped to laugh at a squirrel, who had put his nose out of a tree; and she said, as if the squirrel had reminded her of something, or she had not been thinking of the squirrel after all, —

"'I have heard that you are a poet. Will you show me some of your rhymes?'

"I did not stop to ask who had told her a thing so monstrous. Some verses I had just written lay in the book I held in my hand. I had not thought of showing them to her, nor any thing of their kind. She would pity me again. Yet some wild whim seized me, and I put the paper in her hand.

"'There is a secret in this,' I said. 'If you find it, be tender with it.'

"She was taken by surprise, and the paper fluttered as she opened it. I stood a little aloof while she read my crazy lines. I don't know what I had hoped for as I watched her read. A blush, a confusion, a look of consciousness without displeasure. What right had I to look for these, after a former rebuff? Had I seen them I should have spoken, and learned the truth, and the whole truth; but nothing of the kind met my eyes. Her face got a little paler as she read, and there was a look of grief on it when she had done: her arm dropped by her side, and she crushed the paper into the heart of her folded hand.

"'Such love ought to be returned,' she said coldly. 'I am very sorry.' And we parted like two people made of ice. I hope I am sufficiently snubbed now: I shall return to Australia as soon as I have brought her safely to Monasterlea."

"She was right to think that he is a poet," said May. "At least, he can write love-songs."

She was talking to herself in a certain little inn chamber, her own for the time, where of late she had given herself up to many grave dreams and reveries. It was a chamber very fit for a young maid to dream in, with a passion-flower running all round the window, looking out upon a water-fall descending with swift gleams of light into a melancholy tarn, whose perpetual plash and drip made a restless murmur of music through the place night and day.

"If I were in his place I would scorn to write them to her!" May opened her shut hand, and flung a little ball of crumpled paper fiercely to the other end of the room; and then followed a long silence in the chamber, except for the music that was coming in through the window. She was kneeling at the open sash with her head crushed up for coolness against the broad clustered leaves of the passion-flower; and the silence was to her a long, fevered space of confused reflection, into which we have no more right to pry than into a private letter, of the contents of which even the owner has not yet possessed himself. The music from without was led by a haymaking woman down in the meadows below the inn, who, in a round supple voice, was singing a winding Irish tune ripe with melody. She had been singing it every day and all day long for a week; and each time she sang it, it had seemed to become sweeter and softer, growing familiar to May's listening ears. Now the words of Paul's song wandered down into the meadows from the corner where they had been so ignominously flung, and set themselves to the tune as if by magic. They matched with the measure, and they wound themselves into the melody; and the water-fall made an accompaniment as it drummed and crashed and tinkled into the tarn.

At this time Aunt Martha had quite lost patience with the son of her adoption. Why should he look so gloomy? What cause had he for grief of any kind? Was not all the world shining on him? An inheritance in prospect — and — and — Miss

Martha could go no further. She was too loyal to her niece to declare even to her own thoughts that a young man here amongst them might have May for a wife. It was different from building castles while he was at the other side of the world; but it was not for this ending, she was forced to confess, that Aunt Martha had left her nest under the belfry of Monasterlea, and taken to gypsy ways at her stay-at-home time of life. She had hoped, that in giving up her own comfort, she was at least doing something towards uniting two young hearts; now it seemed that she had been doing no such thing. After pondering over the matter very deeply, she shifted the blame from Paul, and persuaded herself that May must be in the wrong. Thinking over this, her anxiety got the better of her discretion.

"Aunt Martha," said May one evening in the twilight, when Paul was absent, and Miss Martha fidgety, but knitting in apparent peace, "I am terribly tired of this place. Let us go home!"

"Sit down here, child, and let me speak to you. You move about the room so, you make me dizzy. If I speak to you in one corner, you are in another before I have done; and I can't tell where my answer is coming from. I want to ask you a question."

"Here I am, aunty, as steady as a rock!"

"You have seen more of Paul than I have done lately. Do you think he has any intention of marrying, and settling down in his own country? In his mother's place, I should like to see him settled, for many reasons."

May knew too well what was passing in her aunt's mind. The humiliating folly must be driven out wholly and without delay, even if Paul's secret must be dragged forth for the purpose.

"I think nothing is more unlikely," she said with emphasis. "Indeed — it is not fair — we must not speak of it, — but he has met with a disappointment which it seems he cannot get over. He will return to Australia before long."

May announced this from a vantage-ground at the back of her aunt's chair; but she need not have been so cunning: Miss Martha's failing eyes were no way keen in the shifting dusk.

A disappointment!" The old lady sat erect in her chair, and an afflicting idea went whirling through her head. "I hope — May! — you have not refused him!"

"No, no, no!" said May breathlessly. "O aunty! you make a very great mistake!"

"Do I," said Miss Martha meekly, in sad bewilderment at this proof of the perversity of the heart of man. "Have I really made such a mistake as that? And yet" —

But May was gone; and it was of no use to go on talking to the empty walls.

So the little party returned home under a cloud of gloom. As Miss Martha sat down thankfully under her own roof, she called herself an old fool for castle-building and match-making, for worrying herself at her time of life when she ought to have peace. May felt like a stranger in returning to her home. Something had gone out of her life, and something had come into it, since she had last crossed the threshold of her familiar room; but that was her own affair, and the walls must not know it. Paul looked pale and worn when he took his place at the table with them that evening, as unlike as possible to the joyful Paul who had sat down there on that first evening, now more than a month ago.

He had fallen back so completely under the old shadow, that he was saying to himself as he ate his bread, that he was a man accursed, who could never expect to be loved. Already here was the working of his evil influence. These friends who had gladly welcomed him had grown cold and constrained. A shadow had come over May who had been so blithe with him at first. He would take leave of her to-night, and for the future think no more of being happy.

The little brown parlor was full of starlight, when Miss Martha went out to talk to old Nanny about the pigs. And Paul snatched the opportunity, and began to say farewell to May.

He began so suddenly, she was so utterly without the key to his meaning, that half of his wild things had been said before she began to guess what he was saying.

"I feared I should bring my shadow with me," he was declaring when she caught the drift of his words, "and I tried to keep away, and I could not. The memory of your face haunted me, and brought me back to your side. I love you as no one will ever love you again. What does it matter? You pity me, I know. Some day I may be glad to remember it; but now it cannot help me. For I have been fool enough to hope that I could win your entire love: that you could save me from a curse; that I might live and die as blest a man as love ever made happy. Your pity has twice warned me, and yet I speak to you like this; but it is because you will never see me any more. I chill you with my presence, and I am going away. I trust you may be happy. I hope that Mr. Lee may love and cherish" —

Here Paul paused and panted, and looked able to punish Mr. Lee if the devotion of that unknown rival should be found faulty in its measure. Before he could finish his sentence, the parlor was thrown open; and Bridget thrust herself in, with a sly, subdued grin upon her buxom face.

"There's a gintleman outbye wants to see ye, miss. Despert anxious he is, miss, if you plase."

"A gentleman!" said May. With new life dancing at her heart, with an inclination to laugh and to cry, with fear and delight and a slight sense of the ridiculous all struggling within her at once, she seized upon some flower-pots, and began settling them in their stand, that Bridget might not see her face and the shaking of her hands. A gentleman! Bridget's announcement was as strange as as if she had said, "There is a troop of soldiers come to arrest you;" but May did not know at the moment whether it was a strange thing or not. She only wished that Bridget would go away, so that Paul might speak again.

"Yes, miss. A fine big gintleman wid a spanking horse. Misther Lee is his name, an' he says" —

Paul had turned his back upon the unwelcome Bridget, and was standing at the open window looking out. When Bridget said, "Misther Lee," he put his hand on the sill, vaulted quickly out, and disappeared.

May sat down, and stared pitifully at her hand-maiden. Had the lass been but away she might have held out a finger to keep Paul by her side; but Bridget's presence was a broad fact, in every sense of the word; and Paul was gone away. Not forever, oh, no, not forever! That would be too mad, when she had not even answered him nor said good-by.

"He said, miss," went on Bridget in her ignorance, "that he would not come in, but axes as a favor that yoursel' would spake a word wid him outbye."

"Very well; let him wait. Bridget, go for my handkerchief, if you please, on the table, in my drawer, in my room."

Bridget gone, she flew to the window, peeped across the sash, thrust herself across the sash. She could see faintly the moors, the meadows, the white path, the distant stile; but there was no Paul anywhere to be seen.

"Paul!" she whispered softly; "Paul!" she wailed more audibly; but he was not lurking anywhere within the reach of a timid voice. She drew back and leaned, sickening, against the wall; and then Bridget came back with the handkerchief, and there was nothing to be done but to go out and meet Christopher Lee.

She did not doubt as she stood yet a minute longer, trying to steady her nerves, that Christopher had come to tell her of his full happiness, as she had bade him. She remembered that the curious crisis of his fate must be either past or close at hand. Perhaps he was already married, or perhaps he would be to-morrow. She was glad for his sake; but it was not so easy to spend good wishes on his bride, whose vanity had so wantonly wrought mischief. Yet she could now afford to laugh at the silly blunders that had been made. She could laugh, or she could cry; but there was no time for doing either. She must go out and show some courtesy to the visitor.

She stepped out into the starlight, looking right and left and over her shoulder, hoping to see Paul coming back. She could not but think still that he was sulking among the tombstones, or stamping out his passion behind some hedge. How she would laugh at him by and by when he would finish his tragedy! How she would tease him about being so daunted by an unreality!

Yes: there was Christopher Lee, surely enough, in this unwonted place, and at this untimely hour. Till she really saw him, there in the night, at Monasterlea, she did not know how odd it was. It was very odd, and of course Paul thought it so. A little boy was holding a horse out on the road, and the rider was walking up and down by the ruined cloisters. In the clearness of the half-dark May could see that his clothes were white with dust, and his face like one distracted.

"Oh!" he said, hurrying to meet her, and grasping her hands painfully, "it is kind of you to come and speak to a ruined man!"

"Ruined! Oh, no, Mr. Lee, not that!" cried May, with an overwhelming sense of every thing in the world going wrong at the same time.

"Quite ruined; utterly ruined!" said Christopher grimly, lingering on the fatal word.

"But how ruined? Surely it cannot be that Katherine" —

"Don't mention her!" he cried. "Don't name her name! I was warned, and I would not listen! How could I believe the woman I loved, and who had vowed herself to me, to be a heartless actress, a mere shameful coquette? I am paying the penalty of my folly now. Oh! I am maddened at the bare thought of it; that for months she has been laughing at me, while she

made me play the fool for her amusement. She owned it to me to-day, when she laughed in my face. She laughed again when I threatened her with what the world would think of her. It was all rapture to her, every reproach, every groan that I uttered; for I did give her this glory, — I groaned."

The young man suited the action to the word, and looked fiercely at May, and over her head, as if she and the whole world had been to blame in this matter. Then he made a fresh dash at his wrongs.

"Yes, I complained," he went on, "and that gave her delight. She had looked forward to that hour, had willed it, and planned it, so that a man might be drowned in ruin to give her beauty an unholy triumph. She will wear my wrecked life as a feather in her cap. Let her wear it, then! and may it be very becoming to her, especially when she shall long for a kind heart near her own, and shall not find it! In the mean time let her world make a goddess of her, and let it join in her laugh against one who is lost, lost for her sake!"

"No, no, not lost!" said May, in great awe of this excited grief, not knowing what to say.

"Not lost, do you say? Do you know that if I am a married man in three weeks hence I shall be the owner of twenty thousand a year for the remainder of my life? Think of what it means, that twenty thousand a year. It means to be a gentleman, to be of some use in the world, to have liberty to enjoy the sweet pleasant things of life. And all this I might have had, with somebody to be loved by, and to share it with, only for *her*. And oh! how I loved her and trusted in her!"

He buried his face in his hands, and sobbed like a child.

"And now I am a beggar!" he said, looking up again. "A beggar, and a fool before the world. I have broken my mother's heart; I have destroyed my own future; I will not endure to live any longer."

"You are talking wildly," said May, touching his arm. "You cannot mean what you say. You are no coward?"

"It does not matter what you call me," he said; "call me any thing that you please. I am a coward, if that means a man who will not outlive his ruin and disgrace. I came here to-night to say good-by to you, May Mourne. You were very kind to me, and you are the last person I shall look on in this world. I will not see my mother's face again. You will, maybe, be good to her when I am gone, for I have sworn not to live another day!"

He was speaking in an unnaturally high-pitched voice, like a suppressed shriek. It was getting wilder every moment. May was thoroughly terrified, but controlled herself with an effort.

"Then you must break your oath," she said, in a strong, distinct voice, which shocked him from its contrast with her former pleading tones.

He gazed at her in silence.

"You must break your rash oath," she repeated. "You see, I am not afraid of you, though you are so desperate. I declare that I will not let you go away from this place to-night until you have sworn to me that you will do yourself no hurt!"

"I might break that oath also," he said.

"No, you would not, and I will tell you why. You would not throw away your soul, because you have lost your love and your fortune; and if you do not give me the promise at once," she added, passing her arm through his, "I will hold you like this until you will give it to me."

He looked at her wonderingly. His passion seemed to have cooled down. He put her hand gently from his arm, and began walking rapidly up and down under the shadow of the cloisters. May stood by, silent, — urging nothing, but watching. She saw that he was deliberating, or seemed to be so doing. He saw her standing there, patient, watchful, resolved. Every time he turned he could see the white figure waiting unwearied, upon a mound of graves, whither she had followed him, and where he had left her; with a broken cross at her feet, and the stars about her head.

At last he approached her, humbly and quietly.

"You see I am quite calm now. I will rave no more." But he was not calm at all, though his voice was subdued, and there was a very strange wildness in his eyes. "Shall I dare to speak to you every thing that is in my heart at this moment? Shall I tell you of a whisper that an angel has whispered to me?"

"Yes," said May, "for angels whisper nothing that is horrible and wrong. You know that I am your friend, and I will help you all that such a weak friend may help."

He drew her hand through his arm, and placed it where she had before placed it herself. She did not hinder, because she was bent on saving him. They had walked on a few steps, and then Christopher said abruptly, —

"May Mourne, will you marry me?"

"Marry you!" she cried.

"Yes," said he, "me. One who has been raving to you about the loss of another

woman. A man who has been tricked and blinded, but who has got his eyes opened at last. A man who can see you faithful and good, and can curse the days he ever loved one less noble. I will worship you all the years of my life. I will be a good husband to you. I will strive to be a good man, in order to do you honor. I will have gold to share with you, — gold which you will have bestowed on me as if you had brought it for a dowry. May Mourne, I will love you. Will you be my wife?"

"Oh, no," said May, "oh, no!"

"Ah! there it is," he cried. "I knew that you would refuse; but I can plead. You think I love Katherine Archbold — Nay, I hate her, I hate her!"

"Hush," said May. "Indeed, I am not jealous of her."

"God bless you! What is it, then? Whisper, and tell me what it is that you are afraid of. Not of Christopher Lee? He would not hurt any one, though he was near drowning himself in the river an hour ago. He is a poor wrecked creature, whom you can save if you will. He has loved you already longer than you think. How beautiful you looked with all the stars about your head! *She* never had the stars about her head. There is a hard, cruel, blazing sun always shining and burning round her head, that scorches men's eyes, and withers up their brains."

He was lashing himself into a fury again. It was such a strange kind of fury, that May felt more frightened for him than annoyed for herself. She thought of him less as a sane man than as one sick and delirious.

"Mr. Lee," she said, "will you come in and rest a while? You are sadly tired, and you want refreshment."

"I want you," he said wildly, "I want only you. You will be rest and refreshment, and all that I need. I will make you a princess. I will pour gold into your lap. You will rest my head on your knee, and cool it with your hands. It is burning hot, it is full of fire, — and nobody will give me a drink of cold water, because it is known that I am a beggar."

"Come in," said May soothingly, and drawing him gently, "come in with me, and I will give you water, — any thing you like." She had felt the burning touch of his hand upon her, and she dreaded the strange glare which she saw in his eyes. The man had got a fever, and his life might be in her hands.

"I will not go," he said, "I will not move, until you promise me that you will marry me to-morrow. Katherine, Katherine!" he cried, gnashing his teeth, and grasping her hands until he almost crushed the slight fingers; "promise me that you will marry me to-morrow. Promise, or I will drown myself this night!"

"Nay, come in," said May coaxingly, while she shivered with fear. "I am tired and cold. Come in, and we will talk about it."

"Curse you!" he said, flinging back her hands with such force that she nearly fell. "Curse your smooth promises, and your coaxing, and your putting off. I will have no more of it." And with a cry like that of some hurt animal, he bounded from her side, and rushed, like a madman as he was, across the graveyard, towards the river.

But May was as swift-footed as a deer. She could run to save a life. She had no blinding flashes of the fire of madness before her eyes to make her stumble, and she had, besides, the cunning of sanity, and a natural presence of mind. She knew all the short cuts about Monasterlea. By means of her wit, and her speed, she met Christopher Lee before he reached the river-side. She was a quarter of a mile from home, and she was at the mercy of a strong man bereft of reason; but she was not afraid.

She laid hold of him, and clasped her two hands across his arm.

"Come with me, dear," she said. "I am your mother. You will not hurt me, Christopher? Not hurt your old mother?" For he was wrestling with her.

At the last words he stood still, as if shocked. "Hurt my mother!" he said. "Who asked such a question? When did I hurt you, mother?"

"Never indeed, dear," said May, "And you will not now. I want you to help me with your strong arm, Christopher. Help me up the hill, and into the house."

He obeyed her, but it was a terrible walk. Every moment she expected that he would break from her, and she kept a firm clasp of her two hands on his arm. At the door she met old Nanny and Miss Martha, going out to look for her in some dismay. She signed to them, and they gradually understood her; and, after some fright and difficulty the two old women got Christopher put to bed, where a man sick ought to be; and then a doctor was sent for to the nearest post-town: and the distraught lover began a hard fight for his life.

Later he wrote to his mother in his convalescence, —

"I am sorry for having brought so much affliction upon you, for I know that vexation must have been the cause of your illness. I am wise now, though my wisdom

is bought at a great cost. I could wish that I had remained delirious for a few more days, for the crisis of my life would have been then quite over. After all, it makes only a little bit of difference, though it will be tedious counting the hours going past; and I dare say I shall lie awake to hear the clock strike twelve on next Friday night. Afterwards it will be something to tell you, the tenderness and care I have met with here. At present I am weak, as you will see by my scrawl. I have some recollection of asking Miss Mourne to marry me (not the old lady) just before I fell into my fever. Of course I was not in my senses, and she pretends to forget it. Would to God I had been lucky enough to meet her first! But the other woman would have out-dazzled her, I suppose, and it would have been just the same thing. I have been thinking that there are attorney friends of yours in Dublin who would take me into their office. . . .

"She is getting some flowers for me in her garden at this moment. I know they are for me, for she brings them fresh every day. She seems to me like an angel, if angels could be so sympathetic and practical in their ways. There is something in her swift movements, and the flutter of her white dress, that suggests the idea of wings. It is the quaintest garden that you ever set your eyes upon. A place that Abraham Cowley would have delighted in, when the sun shines across it, stopping with an intense frown of shade at every obstacle in his way. The manner in which cloisters and arches and tombstones peep through all the holes in the bloom has an oddness and charm for any one who has time to think. I have plenty of time now"—

Mrs. Lee uttered her customary long lamentation over this letter, and declared to her nurse and doctor that her boy must be still raving, or he could not think of gardens at such a time. While there was life there was hope; and, as he had returned to his senses, there were still five long days of life before his future need be buried out of sight of the prosperous world. Get her her shawls and her bonnet, for her pains were much better now. The poor lady had been suffering from an attack of rheumatism, brought on by her eccentric flight to Dublin from Camlough. Her patience had suddenly expired one night, and she had bribed one of the coachmen to take her away before dawn.

May did not feel at all like an angel, whatever she may have looked, as she moved among her flower-beds. Angels ought at least to be quite happy, and at peace with all men,—including women; and May was not at peace with all men, nor all women. She was very angry with Katherine, whose vanity had led her into that unfortunate mistake which she had made; and it was hard to forgive Christopher,—though so easy to be good to him,—whose coming had driven Paul out of her sight; for Paul had not been heard of since that evening. Aunt Martha would keep saying, "I wonder what *can* have happened to that young man!" and "Upon my word he has treated us very badly!" But still he never came back along the path across the moor. His farmhouse still smoked with its chimney thrust out of the hollow; but the people there knew nothing of him, except that he had paid them and gone away.

May was sorry for Christopher; yet, while he was lying desperately ill, and she was creeping about all day with ice for his head and medicine from the doctor, she could not have denied herself to be unutterably happy all the time. She was glorying in her good fortune, and looking out through every loophole to see her lover coming back; and she triumphed over Katherine as an angel could not have done; but yet Paul did not appear. It grew to be not wonderful to see her, who had been so quick about her business, standing with Christopher's glass of wine or basin of custard in her hands, gazing, with eyes that were very strange, out of some window or open door. Any ordinary observer would have said that she rejoiced because Christopher was ill, and was in trouble because he got better: for Christopher was growing well again; was able to write a letter, and to follow her with admiring eyes while she picked blossoms from her rose-trees. Mr. Lee's state of health did not much affect her spirits; but she had rather he had died than that Paul should not come back.

So went over the sad, profitless, golden September days. Fruit was ripe, hay was made, and the last of the sweet rose-tribe blushed like rubies on their withering trees. The summer greens were waning in the Woods of Tobereevil, and richer glories were stealing into their place. Here and there the foliage of an over-wearied autumn bough had already fluttered with little gold wings to the ground. The birds' notes were deeper and more rare than they had been a month ago; and, between the glittering links of radiant days, a heavy leaden one now and then intruded itself. The harvest moonlight was so bright at nights that you might have gleaned the meadows

by it, or picked pebbles on a beach; and the creepers were all afire among the ivy over the ruins, and had licked a portion of the cottage into their flames. Miss Martha was fattening cows for the fair; and, between this anxious business and her cares for a sick stranger, had little time to give more than a regretful thought to Paul. Her wonder had abated after three weeks of his absence, and she had made up her mind to be disappointed in him. She feared that he was not untainted by the oddities of his race. She dropped some tears in secret to the memory of her friend Elizabeth, and owned that her promise was very difficult in the fulfilment.

But the younger heart that was beating in the house could not so easily let him go, — could not so easily be consoled by cows, and the best prices at the fair. It sickened at every word that was not news of Paul; and the only things that talked of him were the pigeons, which mourned over him incessantly every hour in the day; but they never had any news, — nothing but unintelligible moans and complainings. The sad night breeze began to tell her from under the eaves that she had lived up to the highest point of her life, and must now travel backward and downward; and the worst of it was that there had been made such a great mistake, it being somebody else's will than that of the good and bountiful God which had thus thrust her back on the fair threshold of a beautiful future, and had left her all forlorn in the very blush of her surprise. She began to pity Aunt Martha, with a pity which she had never thought her worthy of before; for she, too, had lost her love, and the bright promise of her youth; but then she had lived down her grief, and could fatten cows for the fair; could speak of Simon of Tobereevil, and laugh in the same breath; while there could be no pity great enough in the world to avail the loneliness of May Mourne, spinster, even when the twenty years of her age should come, in time, to be thrice told. The blooming oval face was growing white and pointed, her step was slow and weary about the house. She read aloud to Christopher as he sat, six feet of patient convalescence in the great arm-chair at the parlor window, watching ebb away tediously the last remnant of time in which it was still actually possible for him to avert his worldly ruin. Her voice was monotonous, at times almost harsh, and jarred on her own ears, and made her task irksome. The best thing about the effort was, that it was easier than talking, when it seemed that there was nothing she wanted to say except, "Why does not Paul come back?" Neither she nor Christopher took in the meaning of the one word that she read, as the young voice went on telling forth the scenes of a play in à plaintive recitative, across which there swept, from time to time, some brusk and discordant note.

And all this time Aunt Martha was at rest about her, seeing her so quiet, and so willing to be useful. If her cheeks were white, the bloom had gone so gradually that the good lady did not miss it. She had feared some weeks ago that her pretty maid might too well like that Paul who had since proved himself so fantastic, and so unstable, and so cold; but as the child did not talk of him, nor complain, nor seem to miss him, she concluded that this alarm had been but a fancy of her own. She did not stop to ask herself if she had talked or complained when the joy had been taken away out of her own bygone youth. It was well, thought Miss Martha, that there had been no promise to Elizabeth about giving her girl, as a wife, to the miser's heir. Tobereevil should never blight her as it had blighted her old aunt. She would pray that her niece might be blest with a better lot than that of a heart-broken wife, or a saddened old maid.

Miss Martha had never complained of her lot as an old maid; but she plainly avowed to herself now, when she was on the subject, that the life of a woman, such as herself, was apt to be sadder than many others. There is a trick of looking back which she finds it difficult to unlearn; and her glances over her shoulder hurt her more sharply than do other people's. A man inclined for retrospect will perhaps see efforts before success, which he would not be willing to cancel even to bring back his youth; a wife knows nothing better worth her mature contemplation than the early years of love which she has toiled through with her husband; a mother will see her children grow so tall that between their smiling faces the landscape of the past shines but in very faint gleams, she being no longer large enough to see visions over their heads; but for the single woman, said Miss Martha, who ought to have been a wife, there is nothing tall enough, nor broad enough, to shut out that one bleak point, just fringed by the remnant of the roses of youth, where the first step was taken upon her lonely road.

So the good old lady was very thankful, seeing that May's heart was quite untouched.

CHAPTER XXI.

S. LEE STRUGGLES AGAINST FATE.

OT only did May become pale, but began to like lonely walks up and ı the damp cloisters; to flit about like ; in the twilight; and to climb to her ıaunt in the belfry, in order that she t look out over the land like "Sister ;," and see if there was "anybody ıg." One evening she was leaning the garden-hedge, peering into the hing landscape, and devouring every ıggestion that the falling night pre- l to her mind. Suddenly there came ed eyes glaring down the road; not ıgry eyes of some terrible demon, as ıt they might have been supposed, but carriage-lamps. Yet they could not proved a sight more surprising if they ıeen a couple of unlucky stars jostled f their place, in consequence of too crowding upon the milky-way.

ey came glaring down the road, and stopped before the gate of Monaster- The darkling landscape swam before s eyes, as a delightful idea flashed gh her mind that this was Paul com- ack. She had flown half-way to the ɔefore joy gave way to another feeling, she hid behind a rose-bush. Mean- the two red lamps had glared right up ıth, and into the open eyes of the cot- and answering lights had already ap- d at the door. The coachman had ıis box, and May could see the dis- ment of the carriage. A slow, heavy rolled from the interior of the coach, sound that was not unfamiliar made y to her ears. Her hopes fell flat and ɜd as she stood up, and stepped for- to receive Mrs. Lee.

h-a-ah! my beloved daughter!" she as May appeared. It was an odd ıf address; but, considering the afflic- ıf the visitor, May would not have ɜred at, nor objected to, being ad- d as "my dear grandmother!"

knew it from the first," Mrs. Lee went a choking voice, while she took des- measures with one hand to save her- rom strangulation by loosening the s of her weightiest cloak from about ɜck, and letting it fall to the ground. as not for nothing that I felt like a r for you at Camlough. Carry up ıamper of wine, my man! A little ıt, my love, for your aunt. And I ɔeen picking up fresh eggs as I drove along — from the country people — all day; your cook may find them useful."

Miss Martha here arrived on the scene, with Nanny and Bridget and torches, and the little commotion of welcome having subsided, the mother was conducted to the embraces of her son; and then, after going through several ceremonies of joy and benediction, she was again taken possession of by May, and conducted to a guest-chamber, to remove the traces of her travel. Having settled her front and her turban, she sank at last into a large arm-chair, and prepared further to unburden her soul of the purpose with which it was charged.

"Ah! my dear daughter! Such a daughter as never was welcomed before to a mother's longing heart. Sit down at my feet, my pretty one, and let us talk at our leisure about our plans."

But May had no plans, and she preferred standing erect. Yet she declared herself willing to converse with Mrs. Lee.

"Nay, nay, my dear," said that lady: "why so coy? You must think me very blind not to have seen what was going on between you and Christopher."

"Nothing ever went on, Mrs. Lee. You, of all others, ought to know that well."

"My dear girl," said Mrs. Lee, taking her hands, and trying to draw her down for a kiss, "do you mean to say that my poor boy did not propose to you?"

"I thought he had forgotten it," said May, aghast. "How could you find it out? He was delirious when he did it, and he thought I was Katherine."

"Thought you were Katherine? Ha, ha! Excuse me, my dear; for I know you have cause to be jealous, and to stand on your dignity: but you need not with me, my dear, his poor, anxious, old mother. It is long since he gave up Miss Archbold, and fixed his affections upon you. Excuse me; for I know your devotion to him since, which has saved his precious life; but it was his love for you which threw him into this fever."

"Did he tell you so?" asked May, knitting her brows.

"Well, no," said Mrs. Lee, with a spasm of fear that she was going too far; "but do you think an anxious mother cannot read the heart of her son?"

"Not at such a distance, I should think, and without the help of a telescope," said May, with a little grim mirth.

"Ah, you are laughing at me!" said Mrs. Lee, and her tears began to descend; "and I had so buoyed myself up with the

hope that you, at least, would be merciful and kind to my dear son, — so different from that other woman; that his future would be a sacred affair to you; and now — and now" — Mrs. Lee wept.

"Pray don't cry," said May, with a conscious-stricken feeling that she was behaving very inhospitably in thus distressing her tired guest. "I am sorry, indeed, to disappoint you; and I see you have deceived yourself in some strange way. I have great pity for your son; but you know I could not marry him for that reason, especially as he does not even want me."

"There it is, — there it is!" cried Mrs. Lee. "I knew it was only proper feeling that was working your little heart. And can you really think that he does not wish to marry you? If you read his letter, his last letter, that heart-broken letter" —

May's temper and sense of humor both began to get lively.

"Mrs. Lee," she said, "I know it is very important that your son should be married before Friday."

"You do, you do!" cried Mrs. Lee, with increasing emotion. "My own frank, devoted girl! How bravely she comes to the point! I almost feared to remind her of it, but I need not have doubted her. She will throw herself into the breach. She will save us from ruin: be mistress of a manly heart, and twenty thousand pounds a year.

"But, Mrs. Lee" —

"I knew she would do it, and, as she says, it must be done before next Friday. I thought about all this when I brought a parson with me in the coach. He did not object to the trip on account of the shooting. I dropped him at a farmhouse, about a mile away. A most respectable clergyman, but with his time not fully occupied."

May could bear no more just at present. Her cheeks burned with indignation, and the corners of her mouth were twitching with laughter; yet she was so sorry all the while for mother and son, that she could not either laugh or fly in a passion with any comfort. Fortunately, Miss Martha came in search of her guest, allowing May to make her escape; and she heard nothing more about matrimony for that one night at least.

On the next day, however, it was plain that a campaign had been entered upon by Mrs. Lee, which she meant to carry on with vigor till the hands of the clock should point to midnight on Friday. Christopher in his meekness and weakness had been talked to by his mother, and looked wistfully at May, and even ventured to say to her, that, though he could not have dared to originate the proposal seeing all that had passed, still, that she should never have reason to repent it if she could bring herself to be so generous as to marry him. May found it cruel to be thus punished a second time for a second of Katherine's sins. It was easy to silence poor Christopher, but Mrs. Lee would not be put down; and the hardest part was, that she had in some sort talked over Miss Martha to her side.

"Only think of what two young people could do with twenty thousand a year!" she said. "And two such young people as they are, my dear ma'am, — so well matched in youth, in appearance, in tastes! It is dreadful to think of such a crisis coming near, when all might turn out so happily in one hour by the joining of their two dear hands!"

Aunt Martha listened, and was fluttered. There was a great deal of truth in what Mrs. Lee was saying; she was smarting a little from Paul's indifference to her niece, and he was gone away and had disappointed her, — she had no longer his interests to provide for; neither did that stray duke, whose interference had once appeared so inevitable, seem to be on visiting terms at Camlough after all; and it might be a long time, indeed, before another fine young man with twenty thousand a year should come courting pretty May at Monasterlea. By and by Aunt Martha faltered forth a conditional consent to Mrs. Lee's proposed plan. She would talk to her niece; and, if the child could be persuaded, the marriage should take place.

May perceived this yielding of her aunt with dismay and resentment, and the ceremony of the talking over produced no satisfactory results. Miss Martha, on this occasion, found her sitting in the farthest corner of her room, under the sloping wall, with her hands locked in her lap, and her mouth tightened up into a straight line of determination.

"I know what you are coming to say, Aunt Martha," she said, drawing still farther back into her corner, but speaking loud and plain: "I never expected that you would go over to the enemy."

"The enemy, my darling! Indeed, there is no enemy. I am just going to ask you to think seriously of the thing. The young man is good and amiable, and will make an excellent husband. My May would be a lady, and could go and come when and where she liked."

"I don't want to go, nor to come," said May, "only to stay where I am;" and she locked her feet together, as if, in that

identical corner, she had resolved to live and die.

"I should no longer have any anxiety about providing for your future."

"Never mind that, aunty: I can turn milk-maid any day."

"You shall not need; but what I mean to say is, that a good husband is a treasure not to be met with every week."

"But I don't want a good husband every week, nor any week, nor a bad one either. How nicely you have done without one yourself, Aunt Martha!"

"Oh! of course, if you desire to be an old maid" — said Miss Martha.

"I do not desire it: I desire nothing of the kind; but I had rather put up with it, as you have done, aunty, than sell myself, for even twenty thousand a year."

"My dear, you never spoke to me in that way before. Nobody ever said yet that I 'put up with it.' I have always" —

"Now, now, aunty," said May, springing from her corner at last, and putting her arms round the old lady's neck, "you know very well that you put up with it because you could not marry the person you liked: and I love you for doing it, and I mean to do the same."

"Do the same!" echoed Miss Martha, in astonishment; and then she saw that May's eyes were wet with tears.

"The very same," said May, laughing. "And you must promise to say nothing more about this matter; but try to get Mrs. Lee to take her poor son away. It is quite time that we two old maids had this house to ourselves again."

On Friday morning, as May walked down the garden path, a gentleman met her coming towards the house. He was dressed like a clergyman, but carried a gun. He took off his hat, and introduced himself as a friend of Mrs. Lee, who had come by appointment to see that lady. May bade him welcome, and accompanied him to the house, knowing very well that here was the parson come to marry her. She conducted him to the parlor where Christopher was sitting, and did not think it advisable to awake Mrs. Lee, who had slept longer than usual, in consequence of much trouble and excitement, and many wakeful nights.

What passed between Christopher and the parson has never been recorded. After they had been for some time shut up together, May saw, from an upper window, the two men walking side by side down the path to the gate. Christopher was leaning on his stick, and walked slowly, and looked downcast but dignified. The parson was nodding his head, and talking briskly; and as he went away shook hands a second time with Christopher over the gate: then Mr. Lee returned slowly to the house.

Soon afterwards Mrs. Lee came to light, and held private converse with her son for half an hour. There were sounds of weeping from the parlor during this time; and at last Christopher led back his mother to the door of her own room, where she returned to bed, and would take comfort from no one. Miss Martha sat with Christopher the rest of the day, while May kept aloof, feeling like a culprit. In spite of all she knew to the contrary, it seemed as if she must be to blame for Christopher's mishap.

Towards evening she ventured to show her face in the parlor. Aunt Martha had left Mr. Lee to take a nap in his chair, but the young man was wide awake when May came stealing in. She brought him a vase of the latest flowers, including the very last rose of summer, as a needless peace-offering, and a vain little temptation to make him glad. Christopher was not at war with her, but he could not be glad. He smiled over the flowers, and thanked her for her trouble; and then he had a little more to say.

"I am sorry and ashamed of all the trouble you have had with us," he said. "It was a monstrous thing to torment you as my mother and I have done. I beg of you to forgive and forget what has passed. We shall leave you to-morrow, full of gratitude for all the kindness you have shown to a sick man; and by and by I shall set to work, and be a new creature. Will you give me your hand in token that we are friends?"

"Right willingly," said May, giving her hand, and feeling sorely distressed. Christopher's eyes filled with tears, and he raised her fingers to his lips. While she thus stood beside him, and he kissed her hand, there was a witness of this scene of forgiveness and farewell. The leaves fluttered at the window as a shadow came among them, and then quickly disappeared. Christopher saw nothing, for his face was turned from the window; but May had glanced up quickly and seen — Paul.

She snatched her hand from Christopher with a little cry. "What is it?" he said, fearing he had offended her; but she said, "Oh, nothing!" and muttered something about the window, so that he thought she had seen a strolling beggar; but May was gone from the room before he could make up his mind. She nearly ran down Brid-

get, who was bringing in the tea-tray and the candles, and then stopped in the hall, and assured herself that she ought to go to her own room. What, hide in her own room when Paul was outside, hurrying away, never to come back any more! He had come at an unlucky moment, and had seen what might make him think that he need not come again. She wrung her hands in an agony of indecision, and finally flew down the passage to her own room.

But at the end of the passage, there was an open door through which the moon was shining, and just hard by there lay on a bench a white apron belonging to Bridget, and a large woollen shawl of vivid colors, which the handmaiden was wont to wrap round her head and shoulders. May seeing these, a merry idea sparkled up through all the troubles in her mischievous head. She tied on the apron, and threw the shawl over her head, wrapping it well about her face. She turned up her long dress, and made the apron very conspicuous. Then she went out of the door, and set off running across the fields.

Paul, meanwhile, walking along the meadow-path, stopped at the stile to take a last look at the moonlit ruins, and the cottage with the red lights in the windows, and thus caught sight of (apparently) Bridget coming running to overtake him, with her white apron flying, and her head and shoulders swathed up in the identical shawl which he, in his character as peddler, had bestowed on her. May was at that moment thinking also of the peddler, and thinking delightedly that she was going to trick Paul as cleverly as Paul had once tricked her.

"Oh, musha, sir!" she said, as she stopped, panting beside him, and mimicking Bridget's voice, "but ye do step out fast an' strong! long life to yer honor! Sure the breath is gone from me wid the runnin'. An' the misthress waitin' the tay on yer honor; an' begs wid her compliments that ye will come back at wanst, sir, an' not go 'way in sich a hurry.

Paul's heart beat fast, and she could see him flush up in the moonlight. It seemed to him that this was adding insult to injury.

"I am much obliged to your mistress," he said, "but I could not think of intruding myself on the family at such a time."

"Thin, sich a *what* time, yer honor?"

"Why, at a time when you are preparing for a wedding," said Paul, "You will please take back my good wishes and farewell."

"Oh, but plase yer honor, the misthress'll not be satisfied wid that for an answer. An' the weddin's not to be till — to-morrow," said May, with a mischievous delight in tormenting him a little longer. "An' we're not so busy as ye think. She wants to see yersel." She's *despert* anxious to see you;" emphasizing Bridget's favorite word.

"So the wedding is to be to-morrow, is it? Well, tell your mistress I congratulate the bride; and I certainly shall write to Miss Mourne — the elder lady, I mean — before I sail from the country."

"An' ye won't come back, sir?" said May, feeling blankly that she had gone too far in humoring his fancy about the wedding.

"No, my good girl; and I am sorry for giving you so much trouble. You will take this little present from me to buy you a new dress."

May was dazed with her utter failure. She had just enough presence of mind to know that she ought to keep up the character she had assumed; she must accept the money, and Bridget should be the richer for it. But May quite forgot that though she had borrowed Bridget's shawl, Bridget's hands were at home; and she held out a hand which was unmistakably her own, and which Paul knew as well as he knew her face. How could brown, buxom Bridget give forth such a bit of snow into the moonlight?

"What is this? May!" cried Paul, looking down at the little hand, as if it had been a thing not of flesh and blood.

"There, I am caught!" said May, throwing back the shawl from her face. "And I could cry for vexation, only it is so ridiculous."

"What does it mean?" asked Paul.

"It means that Bridget wanted to thank the peddler for her shawl," said May, dropping a courtesy. "That is all it means. An' now, plaze, sir, shall Bridget take back your message to her misthress?"

"I feel that I ought to be highly flattered by this mark of attention from Mr. Lee's bride," said Paul, with some scorn in his face, as he drew back a little, as if in disgust, from the very lovely figure which the moonlight shone upon.

"Don't call hard names if you please," said May, "I am not accustomed to it. I never was called a bride before in my life."

"This is strange conduct," said Paul sternly, "for a lady who is going to be married to-morrow."

"It would be a little odd in that case," said May.

"Would be? Why, do you forget that you have just told me that the wedding is to be to-morrow?"

"So it is," said May, plucking the thistle-down that grew by the stile. "Barney Fagan and Judy Lynch are to be married in the morning. Tenants of Aunt Martha's. Bridget is to be the bride's-maid."

"Pshaw!" said Paul impatiently, with a stamp of his foot. "Have I not spoken with the parson who was brought here especially from Dublin to perform a marriage at Monasterlea?"

"Have you?" said May. "How simple you are, both you and he. It is only in romances that one hears of a wedding without the consent of the bride."

"Then you are only trifling with this poor man and his wonderful fortune,—just as you are trying to make a fool of me!"

The moonlight gleamed vividly a moment on a little white wrist and hand, as May tossed up her handful of thistle-down into the air; and then she turned suddenly round upon Paul. For one moment she looked the image of womanly indignation, and opened her lips to speak her mind in good earnest; but suddenly her mood changed. Without saying a word she threw Bridget's shawl once more over her head, dropped a prim courtesy to her unmanageable lover, and set off walking as fast as she could towards the house. Upon this Paul regained his senses immediately, and found that he was not at all prepared to turn about and continue his way towards Australia, without further explanation of the state of affairs at Monasterlea. His pain had made him rude, and at least he could not go without offering an apology. He started off to follow May, and, with a few swift strides, came to her side.

"May!" he cried fervently at her ear; but May tripped on, and did not appear to have heard any one speaking just at her back.

"May!" he cried again. "Speak to me! You must not leave me in this way. You must give me some explanation of the things I have seen and the stories I have heard."

"She was spakin' to yer honor long enough," said May, talking over her shoulder as she still sped along. "As for me, I'm only Bridget, an' I'm going home wid my message."

"For Heaven's sake stop a moment,—*Bridget!*" cried Paul.

"What have ye got to say to Bridget?" she said, slackening her pace a little.

"I want you to tell me something about your young mistress. Will you swear that she is not engaged to marry Mr. Christopher Lee?"

"By my feth I will!"

"That she never was engaged to him?"

"By my troth I will!"

"That she does not care about him, except as a friend?"

"I never swore so much in all my life before; but I'll swear that too. Is there any more?"

"That he did not ask her to marry him?"

"I couldn't swear that."

"Well, then, will you swear that she refused him?"

"Ay, will I!"

"And why was the parson brought from Dublin to marry them?"

"Och! sure that was but the crazy fancy of a poor mother in throuble."

"One word more, Bridget. Why did your mistress refuse to marry this rich man?"

"Thin, that's a saycret of her own. If ye want to know that ye must ax hersel'."

"May!"

"Paul!"

"For Heaven's sake, stop, and speak to me in earnest for a moment. Is this all true that Bridget has been swearing?"

"I would not keep a servant that would swear against the truth, Mr. Finiston."

"Will you answer me one more question, as May, not as Bridget? Why have you refused to marry Mr. Lee?"

"For a great many reasons. A great many more than I have time to tell you now. The tea will be waiting, and I must give an account of myself."

"The tea waiting! I declare it shall wait until I hear my sentence from your lips, May! Do you remember all I said that last evening four weeks ago?"

"Yes, I remember it. You were very uncivil."

"I was mad. I am an unhappy person to have any thing to do with. I am of a dangerous nature, uncertain and moody."

"Do you think I am so stupid as not to have found out all that long ago?"

"And in spite of all that, May, will you marry me?"

"I will, Paul. That is, if you would like it very much."

"Like it! O my darling!"

"But the tea, Paul! The tea will be cold. And the whole house will be turning out with lanterns to look for me."

Nevertheless, the tea went on cooling for at least ten minutes longer; and, when May slipped in at last, to take her seat

behind the teapot, she was rebuked as she deserved by her Aunt Martha.

"I met a friend, aunty," she said; "and he is coming in to see you."

"A friend!" said Miss Martha; and then Paul appeared.

CHAPTER XXII.

SIMON IN TORMENT AGAIN.

SIMON FINISTON was getting very old and frail, and the fall of the year was particularly hard upon him. It was severe work going out to pick sticks and straws, in order that he might have a fire to sit by in the evenings; and he was bloodless and chilly, and felt the want of a bit of fire more than he used to do. Tibbie, too, was cross, and would no longer patch his old gown; and his heart failed him when he thought of taking forth an extra garment from those presses on the high gallery, whose contents that strange peddler had forborne to buy.

The coming of winter was always the beginning of a long affliction to the old man; and the affliction now threatened to grow more tragic every year, as the sufferer grew more feeble, and his tormentors became more bold. The roof of the west wing was broken in so far that the rain found its way down to Simon's den. He had to flit to the east wing, which was terribly at the mercy of the winds, the walls being unnecessarily riddled with windows, and the windows riddled by time. The shutters banged and crashed, now scattering the plaster to the floor as they lashed the wall, now shivering the remnants of glass in the panes as they fell forward and shook even the stout oaken framework of the windows. When bound up into order, and forced to keep the peace by use of their rusty bars, they threw the interior of the rooms into utter darkness; but as sensitiveness to cold was, and deafness was not, one of Simon's infirmities, the noise and the light were put in bondage together, and the wind was kept at bay.

Simon's miseries were not all of wind and weather; blasts might be keen, and rain pitiless, but both were angels of mercy compared to Tibbie, who saw a time approaching, when the old man's wavering spark of life having suddenly sunk and gone out, it might be found that he had not made a will in favor of Con the fool. She knew no reason now, why his last days should not be made wretched, in order that he might be forced to frame that will. Simon was not ill in his bed, so that he was not so completely at her mercy as he had been once before; but there was much power in her hands, and she used it. She would come and sit on a bench opposite to him, and rail at him till the shrieking of the wind seemed the mere echo of her voice, and the moaning and thundering outside among the trees only a weird demonstration of applause from that invisible spirit world with which she threatened him. He was horribly superstitious, and was far more afraid of the ghosts among the trees, whom Tibbie talked about, than of the thieves who, she assured him, were ever prowling about seeking for his hoards. As a security against the latter he slept in all his clothes, and with a blackthorn staff in his feeble hands; but he knew of no precaution that he could take against the spirits. These, Tibbie assured him, were only waiting for his death, in order to carry him away with them to where they could wreak their vengeance on him during the leisure of eternity. The only thing which could stave off such horror, and balk the malice of the spirits, would be that simple act of justice which Tibbie prayed her master yet to do; but Simon still refused thus to protect himself. It was like tearing his soul from his body, the thought of signing away with his own hand his long-worshipped money-bags and wasted acres.

As for Tibbie, why she so wished to see that will made, might have been a puzzle to any one. Con was as happy as a fool could be, roaming about the country, fostered by everybody, and always pleased with the variety and freedom of his life; always coming back from each fresh expedition to sit at the feet of blooming Nan Kearney, watching her blissfully as she wove her baskets, and crowing for joy if she stopped to pat him on the head; but this was not the way of life that Tibbie had marked out for him. She was willing enough that he should be fed about the country, and that strangers should give him clothing out of pity; but she desired that he should keep close by the miser of Tobereevil, that he should sing for him, dance for him; so that, while she carried on her persecution, the fool might be as a refuge to the wretched old man, who should turn to him for relief, and, perhaps, do out of gratitude that which he refused to do from fear. Con hated Tobereevil, and had no use for money. Were he owner of all the miser's wealth it would be hard to make him comprehend that such was the case: still harder to make

him assume the rights of mastership, and Tibbie would certainly have all the power in her own hands. What use would she make of her power, and how enjoy her good fortune? A miserable creature clothed in rags, with her arms folded grimly, and a dreary, dreamy look in her half-shut eyes, she prowled about the old mouldering mansion, listening to the groaning of the trees, and thinking about that huge iron safe which was built up in the wall somewhere, and of which she was determined one day to have the key. When Tibbie came to Tobereevil long ago, she was a respectable poor woman, seeking for help for her little nephew, and had travelled a long way to bring him under the notice of his kinsman. When she presented herself at Tobereevil her utmost ambition had been a cottage rent free, and a small pension or dole of clothing for little Con. These denied, she accepted the permission to shelter herself in the kitchen of the mansion, and to pick up scanty food as remuneration for her services in the house; but it seemed that greed was in the air of Tobereevil. Tibbie would now have failed to remember when aspiration after the miser's money-bags had first struck root within her; but it was rank and strong, and could not now be torn away, and it had crushed every other passion of her nature.

Whilst Tibbie was in the midst of her active operations, she was shocked by hearing a rumor that Paul Finiston was in the country, and that very evening fell to stitching together the stuff which she had bought so cheap from the peddler. Never before had she had the heart to bring it out; and now, as she hurried to her treasury and drew forth the stuff which was sufficient at least to cover her respectably, she cursed her ill-fortune which furnished her with only a web of cloth, at the moment when she needed clothing ready made. However, she hacked it with blunt scissors, and sewed it with a rusty needle; and, though she lost a whole day over it, she was in the end well bedight, and felt magnificent enough in her appearance to awe the whole mountain world. She washed her face, and further arraying herself in a moth-eaten cloak, little worn but of ancient date, departed on her search for news of Paul; having first looked in at the door of Simon's den, and advised him to look sharp after his keys, for she was just stepping out at the risk of her life to watch some ill-looking characters whom she had seen prowling about the place. Having thus provided for her master's comfort during her absence, she took her way to the mountains. The Kearneys would give her news, if any news were to be had. Their young gossoons were forever upon the foot; and, as Con would very likely be found hovering about their place, so Con should be Tibbie's excuse for coming panting up the hills.

Much amazed were the young Kearneys to see Tibbie on the mountain; even more so than they had been to see Con arriving amongst them upon the shoulders of a gentleman. Very few in the country knew a great deal about Tibbie. The mother of the Kearneys had never seen her before, so that the gossoons had to whisper to her, —

"Mother, mother! it is the miser's Black Cat!"

"I don't see no cat wid the good woman," said Mrs. Kearney. "Only our own poor pussy goin' to meet her on the brae."

The gossoons laughed in chorus, and plucked at their mother's skirts. They cried that the world was coming to an end, for the Black Cat had got a gown.

"Whisht, will ye!" said Nan. "It's Tibbie from Tobereevil."

Then the house-mother crossed herself and went out to meet the guest, expecting some new message of cruelty from the landlord: but Tibbie had been busy manufacturing a smile, as she climbed up the mountain all the way from her own door; and she now hung out her smile, which, though a little pinched and darkling, was the best she could produce.

"Och, och! I'm tired wid yer mountains," said Tibbie; "an' I ax parding Mrs. Kearney, for lookin' the favior of a sate to dhraw my breath. I'm sarchin' wid anxiety for that poor foolish boy o' mine; an' I thought I knowed where to look for him when I took the road to yer house."

"Oh, ay!" said the house-mother, ready to laugh with relief, finding that only Con was demanded of her instead of an extra pound of rent. "'Deed it's little out o' this he's been since the night he hurt his foot, an' young Misther Finiston hissel' carried him here to us on his shouldhers."

"Anan!" said Tibbie. "An' who is young Misther Finiston?"

"Yer masther's nephew, Misther Paul, an' no other," said Mrs. Kearney, who was not very sorry to see the old woman's chagrin. "An' a gran' an' a kind, an' a beautiful young gintleman he is; and the fine man to be over us some day, plase the Lord! but come in an' take a rest to yersel' an' an air of the fire; an' if ye'll ate a couple o' pratees, I'll have them roasted in a crack."

Tibbie smothered her wrath, and went into the Kearneys' cabin, and did not go

down the mountain again till she was assured that her enemy was indeed in the country as she had heard, and that he had been recognized among the people as the miser's heir.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BLACK CAT MAKES A SPRING.

Now the great desire of Tibbie's soul was, that the agent should at once make his appearence at Tobereevil. A bold move must be made; and ignorant Tibbie had already done every thing in her cause that her unaided powers could do. She could devise new plans even now in her brain, but she needed the lawyer's help to carry them out. Tibbie, who could neither read nor write, stood at the mercy of fate. She might chafe in her wretched kitchen till her fury amounted to madness; but beyond the reach of her own voice this creature could make no sign. All her hope was this: that the wind might blow a great storm, and tear up many trees by the roots, so that Simon should have to write to his agent to come and look to the timber. If the Wicked Woods refused to help her, then was she surely lost indeed; but just at this time the winds were lighter than usual, and the trees stood safe.

Tibbie desisted a little from railing at her master, and, unable to stay within doors from impatience, went out into the woods and mumbled her threats and desires to the grim oaks. She puffed her puny breath into the face of the gray heavens, and waved her arms, and called on the winds to get up and bestir themselves. Con, who had unwillingly, and through fear, accompanied her from the mountains, sat in the branches above her, and grinned at her wrath, and pelted her with acorns. At last the storm answered her challenge, and came down with fury.

Simon had heard many a storm, but he shuddered at this one. The old house shook and groaned, pieces of its roof fell in, and some of its walls were broken. Down came scores of the trees, crashing and creaking, and making a thunder of their own amidst the noise that was abroad, Tibbie croaked for joy when she saw the fallen giants lying prone in the thickets, and she purred over Con as he set off for the nearest posting-village with Simon's letter to the agent. The agent grumbled to himself as he obeyed the summons, for Tobereevil was not a pleasant place on a winter's day.

Arriving there, however, he got such a welcome as he had never got before. Tibbie, to propitiate him, had prepared a room for him in the underground story, in a part of the house which was quite out of the way of old Simon's tottering steps. Here she had built a roaring fire to keep out the cold, and served up a fine roasted pullet, which she had procured with some difficulty from a neighboring farm. Here, too, she laid her plan before the lawyer, which was to draw up a will as he and she should please, and procure Simon's signature to it, on pretence that it was a writ of ejectment for one of his tenants, for whose holding the lawyer had found a better tenant. Simon must be got to sign the paper without reading its contents. The plan was a daring one, but was pronounced worth the trial.

So the agent made out the will. At one time Tibbie wrangled with him over the share which was to be the price of the lawyer's service, but was soon silenced and forced to listen to reason. Next morning the agent strolled out to look at the fallen trees, and to find some simple peasants who should act as witnesses to the will.

It chanced that Mrs. Kearney's "soft gossoons" were hanging about the woods in hope of a job at the agent's hands. They had not gone up to the door and asked to be hired to help with the timber; for they knew, had they made so bold, that their suit must have been denied. So they lingered about the wood, and when the agent chanced to meet them he found them useful. They were set to work all day at getting the timber carried to carts upon the road; their wages to be the fagots which they could pick up when all was done. And even those wicked fagots were precious in the winter time; though people would say that they brought no good to a hearth; though evil sparks did fly out of them while they burned, and strange visions loomed forth out of the white clouds of their smoke, as it curled in sinister wreaths up the chimney. Towards evening pretty Nan came down the mountain, with her yellow locks blowing on the wind, carrying a little can of buttermilk and two tin mugs, and attended by Con, who danced on before her, bearing a large wooden dish of cooked potatoes; and, while the gossoons made a merry supper on the stump of a tree, the lawyer mused at some distance, and made perfect his little plans.

This lawyer was a man who, at the outset of life, had declared to himself that he

would make money without scruple. In his profession he had cheerfully accepted all disreputable business, and taken care to make his spoils of any prey that fell to his share; and yet somehow he had been unlucky until now. Dishonesty had not rewarded him as he had had a right to expect. At times he had even had stings of harrowing doubt as to whether integrity might not, after all, have paid him better in the end. He lived in a country town where people's deeds are easily made known; and he knew an attorney of thorough honesty, who had made a good thing of his fair name. Our agent was now past success in his own peculiar line of life, and found it too late to start afresh on any other; and thus it was with him when Tibbie's little plot found favor in his eyes. With a slice of the Tobereevil property, together with a goodly sum of money as a reward for his faithful service of many years, this hitherto luckless rogue thought he might live to call himself thrifty after all.

Who should arrive into the midst of the supper-party but Bid, the "thraveller," she having stepped down the mountain to help the gossoons to carry the fagots home; so the agent, looking about him, saw a group of persons from whom to choose the witnesses to Simon's signature of the will. He choose Bid and Nan, and accosted them civilly, explaining that Mr. Finiston was making new arrangements for some of his tenantry; a piece of news which made them turn pale; and that he wanted two honest persons to witness the signing of some deeds.

"I won' go!" whispered Nan, plucking Bid by the corner of the cloak. "How do I know bud it's to put my mother out of her hole undher the hill?"

"Aisy, asthore!" said Bid. "It's not for the likes o' you that they'll be signin' papers at Tobereevil. When they want yer mother out of her hole they'll put her out by the shouldher, without the splash o' a pen an' ink; but they're brewin' some quare dhrink for the owld man to swally down, — that's Tibbie an' the lawyer, — or my name's not Bid. I seen them cosherin' wid their heads together this mornin' as I skirted through the threes here, an' they too busy wid their talkin' to see my shadow on the gravel."

"Well, my good woman, can you make up your mind to spare us ten minutes of your valuable time?" asked the lawyer.

"Ay, ay!" said Bid carelessly, "we won't disoblige a gentleman." But when his eyes were turned away she glanced at him swiftly and keenly from under the white silk fringing of her knitted brows; and she followed him to the house, holding by Nan's unwilling hand.

It was getting dusk, and quite dark in the miser's chamber, where the light was so scantily admitted. Tibbie brought in an armful of fagots, and made a brilliant blaze on the hearth, so that the whole of the gloomy room was filled with a dancing, uncertain light. Simon remonstrated, wringing his hands at the waste.

"Stop, woman! you will drive me mad with your extravagance!" he said, snatching at the half-burnt sticks.

"Anan," said Tibbie, "is it wax candles ye want? Gi'e me money, an' I'll see about the buyin' o' them."

"Candles!" cried the miser, with a shudder, as if there had been talk of shedding his blood.

"Ay," returned Tibbie, "ye'll be wantin' some kind o' light to see to write yer name."

"Write my name!" echoed the miser.

"How am I to know, barrin' what I'm tould?" snarled Tibbie. "Yer agent tould me to have a light in the place, bekase the masther had to put his name to some papers without delay. He *said* it was to squeeze money out o' some robber o' a tenant; but may be he was tellin' lies, — only it's not *me* that ought to be blamed."

Simon pricked up his ears. True, there was something to be done in the way of an ejectment; a higher price to be put upon some cabin, or piece of bog; a prospect of another bit of gold to be added to the heap. Well, well, he would put another stick upon the fire. Extravagance was, after all, pleasant when there was a reason for it, and when it did not go too far. What was keeping that man when the thing could be done at once?

"You see, sir," said the lawyer, bustling in, "I have had such a busy day of it after that timber. I think I explained to you long ago all about the necessity for this document. Sorry to give you so much trouble, but things must be properly done."

"Ay, ay!" said the old man, trying to recollect. His memory was beginning to fail him, though his sight was very keen. Well had the forgers contrived that the light should come from the hearth, so that the table on which the paper lay should be in shade.

"You read it all over the other day, you remember," said the lawyer boldly, and only opening one fold of the paper as he laid it flat on the table for the signatures.

"I did not read it," said the miser, — "not that I recollect."

"Oh! I assure you you did, sir. Your mind is so full of business, that little things may escape. You'll remember by and by."

The old man reflected pitifully for a moment, and then, by such feeble light as he had, scrawled his name.

"What are those figures at the door?" he cried suddenly, as he peered through the shifting lights at two shadows in the distance.

"The witnesses," said the lawyer. "You remember, I told you it was necessary to have two witnesses."

"Oh!" said Simon, relieved, and laying down his pen. "I thought, I thought" — But he stopped with this whisper; and the terror that had crossed his mind remained unconfessed.

"Now, my good woman, step forward with your young friend," said the lawyer. "Your name, if you please, and then you will make your mark."

Bid looked steadily at the lawyer for a moment, with her keen old eyes; then turned to the miser.

"Misther Finiston, yer honor," she said, "afore I put my name to that paper, would ye just read it out loud to me, that I may know whether my own little farm isn't in it?"

"Bid!" cried Nan, aghast. For Bid did not own a square inch of land in the world, nor a roof to cover her.

"Nonsense, woman," cried the lawyer. "Mr. Finiston will do no such thing. Your farm! Why, where is your farm? and I can tell you without the papers."

"My own purty little farm down the valley," said cunning Bid.

"It's not in it. There's nothing about it," urged the lawyer, and put his hand on the paper, as if to prevent Simon from lifting it up. If he had not done this he might have carried his point; but the miser's temper would not bear even the appearance of control.

"I will read it!" cried Simon. "You must leave this point to me, sir. I will read it if I please, and as often as I like too." He had got possession of the paper, and held it to the light.

The lawyer saw that he had been too hasty. "I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but let me entreat you not to attempt it till you have better light. We shall get a candle by and by, or, better still, wait till to-morrow. Daylight costs nothing, ha, ha! In the mean time, let us go on with the signatures. Your name, my dear?" to Nan.

But Simon held the paper. He looked at the lawyer's uneasy face, and a cloud of suspicion came into his wary eyes. Bid had done her work, and was too wise to say more; but she edged herself in between the miser and lawyer, foreseeing that the paper might be snatched from Simon's hand. The attempt was made as the old man stooped to bring the glare of the firelight on the sheet. The agent snatched; but Simon kept the parchment, and slipped out of reach of the lawyer's arm on his knees before the hearth. A shriek told that the keen eyes and wits had mastered its contents in less than a minute. The lawyer suddenly disappeared from the room, and was soon driving along the high road, cursing his own folly, which, in grasping too much, had deprived him of the little advantages which he enjoyed at Tobereevil. He, at least, could never show his face to the miser again.

As for Tibbie, she simply put her arms akimbo, and faced her angry master.

"Hag!" he shrieked, "I'll have you hanged for this!"

"No, you won't," said Tibbie. "It would cost too much money. An', besides, nobody would hurt me for sthrivin' to get the rights for my poor boy. If ye weren't so ill-hearted I wouldn't have had to take the law into my own hands. Judges an' lawyers could see that quick enough."

"Begone out of the house!" cried the miser, foaming with rage. "Never let me see your face again!"

"I'll go when I'm ready," said Tibbie. "An' that's my thanks for my long service. An' there's Paul Finiston come home pryin' about the counthry, an' watching to come down on ye. It's little pace ye'll have when he gits next or near you, an' nobody here to purtect ye."

This was Tibbie's last hope, that dread of Paul would cow the old man's anger, and make him loth to be left alone. She had made a great mistake, however, and she quickly found it out.

"Paul Finiston," said the miser, suddenly calm. "Is Paul Finiston in the country?"

"That he is, your honor," said Bid, stepping forward, and dropping a courtesy. "An' as purty-lookin' a gentleman as ye'd meet in a day's walkin'."

Simon's wrath had subsided strangely, and he looked timorous and eager.

"You know where he is to be found?" he asked quickly.

"I think I could find him out, yer honor," said Bid.

"Then go to him," said Simon, "and give him a message from me. I will have him here, and he shall work for me. *He*

never tried to trick me, nor to worry me, nor to rob me!"

He seized the pen beside him, and scribbled some words on a scrap of paper. The paper he gave to Bid.

"Send the first person you meet for the police," he said, with a scowl at Tibbie. The gossoons who were listening in the hall set up a cheer at these words, and set off as volunteers on this mission; then, and only then, did Tibbie lift up her voice, and howl as one baffled and undone. She hurried away to hide herself, and the messenger departed; and Simon double-locked his door, and barricaded his windows, and sat all night long on the watch with his pistols by his side.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WICKED FAGOTS.

May and Paul were sitting together in the firelight in the little brown parlor. They had now been engaged a week; and though winter was coming on, and the white rime upon the window-pane, still the atmosphere of their mountain world was all rose-colored. They had long ago arranged all about their future; and, after a week's perfect happiness, the details of their hopes and their trusts in each other seemed already to be quite an old story. They were now to be intensely happy for the remainder of their lives. Paul had undertaken the management of Miss Martha's farm; and, after a year of prudent waiting, the wedding was to take place. The name of Simon of Tobereevil had not been mentioned during the arrangement of their plans; but Paul was not now afraid of him, nor of the curse, nor of the heirship.

As they sat, radiant with happiness, in the smiles of the firelight, there came a sudden knocking at the house-door of Monasterlea.

After some stepping backward and forward of Bridget between the parlor and hall, a panting, ruddy group made a shy appearance in the frame-work of the doorway.

"It's Misther Paul Finiston I want," said Bid, "an' I have a message from Simon" —

"A message from whom?" cried Paul, thinking his ears must have deceived him.

"From Simon Finiston, yer honor, the masther of Tobereevil; an' I've got it here fast." And Nan flourished her scrap of paper, and delivered it up to Paul's eager hand. The feeble writing said, —

"Will Paul Finiston come and visit the old man who is cruelly beset by thieves and sharpers?"

Paul turned red and pale, and May turned redder and paler as she looked over his shoulder. Bid poured forth a triumphant history of the attempt that had been made to deceive the old miser; and how the agent had been outwitted, and how Simon had taken the news of his nephew's presence in the country. Aunt Martha appeared in the midst of the excitement. The good old lady was beside herself with joy. This was the direct work of Providence. Simon's poor heart had been touched at last, in the eleventh hour. Miss Martha would have liked to go away to her own room to shed a few glad tears: but those good people, the messengers, had an urgent claim on her attention; and she swept them all away with her, to give them supper, and ask them questions, in the kitchen.

But in the mean time Con, who had been making violent demonstrations of delight at seeing Paul again, hit upon a plan for showing his gratitude. His arms were full of the fagots which were the wages of the gossoons; and, as Nan pulled him out of the room, he presented a fagot to Paul, and another to May. Bid turned on her step, and rushed forward with alarm.

"Don't take them! Don't touch them! They're a bad, unlucky present for wan crature to give till another."

"What do you mean?" asked Paul.

"Sure they growed in the bad woods," said Bid, "an' the hearth's betther that's widout them. Poor folks is glad to burn any thin' in the cowld; bud let him take them all away wid him. Don't you have nothin' to do wid them!"

Paul laughed. "Nonsense, my good woman. We must not vex the simple fellow."

May gathered up the bundles in her apron.

"Poor bad little sticks," she said, "I will put them out of the way."

So Bid had to let her keep them, and went away muttering. May at once put the fagots out of sight, and, returning to Paul, found him walking about the room in a state of high excitement.

"Oh, my love!" he said, going to meet her. "Ill-luck is all over with me. The spell of the curse is broken. This is what you have done for me. No sooner is your hand clasped in mine than the world is turned upside-down for the purpose of bringing me good fortune."

"You silly old Paul," said May, shaking her head. "Only that you are a poet, we should not tolerate such nonsense."

"My darling shall be lady of the land,"

went on Paul. "We will pull down the old house, every stone of it; and we will build up a new one — new stones, new mortar, new timber; not one atom of the old walls shall get mixed up with the new ones. We will furnish it with every luxury" —

"But the people, Paul dear? what will you do for the people?"

"Oh, the people of course! They shall pull down the old house, and build up the new one. They shall also have cottages and low rents. I warrant you I will rub the rust off old Simon's guineas. There shall be schools and almshouses. We will cultivate the land, and have a mill on the river. I will show that a man can be generous though sprung from a race of misers."

"Yes, it will be a triumph. O Paul, what a life we have before us! but we must not run too fast. We are not yet the lord and the lady of Tobereevil."

"We are virtually so."

"He is known to be very whimsical," suggested May.

"Oh, do not damp me!" cried Paul, with sudden impatience. "I have done with fear. Do not *you* thrust it back upon me."

"No," said May, "not for the world. You will know better when you have seen the old man."

He did not hear the pain that was in her voice. He did not notice that he had spoken roughly to her, as he had never done before. May hated herself because the tears came into her eyes; and Paul's thoughts were busy with the future master of Tobereevil.

"Yes," he said. "Is it too late to go to-night?"

He let fall her hand, and went out to the hall-door. The snow was beginning to fall, and had blotted out the footprints of the messengers. It would be folly to make new tracks across the piece of the white world into the gloom of the Tobereevil Woods that night. Even to Paul's impatience it seemed that it must be so. May stood downcast on the hearth. There was something new and strange about Paul which made her hate the sight of Simon Finiston's feeble scrawl which lay before her on the mantel-piece.

CHAPTER XXV.

A MORNING VISIT.

EARLY the next morning May and Paul set off together over the snow to Tobereevil. Paul would not go alone. He had a fancy that the miser would be propitiated by the sight of May's charming figure, in a little red cloak and white knitted hood. May, who was not so sanguine, went much against her wish. She had a dread of the old man, who had been the ogre of her childhood, and she did not believe in his new freak. She found it hard that this change should have come just as Paul was making himself happy over the prospect of a simple and unambitious life. Yet she went to please him, trying to temper his wild expectations, and ready to cheer him if his uncertain temper should give way to another mood. It was impossible but that both hearts should become a little chilled as they came nearer to their destination, and emerged from the trees into the shadow of the dilapidated mansion. Paul became pale, but he laughed and appeared in the best spirits. May was silent, and offered a secret prayer for the result of this venture, which seemed so awful. The doors were all barred up, and knocker there was none. The bell was now broken which had once roused Tibbie's ire under Miss Martha's hand. To-day there was no Tibbie to come and fight with the bold ones: it was the miser himself who came shuffling across the hall. He came and took away the bars, slowly and with difficulty, and stood peering at them through the half-open door, very pitiful, very ugly, and suspicious-looking.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am Paul Finiston."

"What brings you here?"

"A message from my uncle, which I received last night. I did not intend to trouble him, but as he sent for me I am come."

"Humph! that is spoken like an honest man. You are welcome to Tobereevil. And who is the lady?"

"This lady is my affianced wife," said Paul, drawing May's hand proudly through his arm.

"Indeed," sneered the miser; "but I only wanted you: I did not send for your wife."

"Oh!" said May eagerly, "do not be displeased with him on my account: I will go back at once. I will not be in the way."

The time had been when he would have shut the door in their faces; but he was now in extremity, and, besides, he was greatly weakened, in his body and in his passions, since that day when Miss Martha had been forced to fly from his presence. It might be that May's glowing face and appealing eyes touched some spot in the

ered heart which was not altogether . At all events, he answered her with ge mildness.

'ou may walk about the house," he "till our business is finished."

ıy thanked him as gratefully as if she been a tenant with a large family to ı he had granted a lease. The miser led Paul across the hall, leaving May ıd her way whither she pleased; and oticed with another pang, such as she elt the night before, that Paul did not :urn his head to look back at her as ınt. Might it be that the monstrous ı of wealth of which Paul had been aid, would yet so grow up within him t would thrust her out of his heart? paused on a step of the gloomy stair- stricken by the thought of such an g for her love. It had been so with Martha: might it not be so with her? ; there not, after all, be some dire ; in the inevitable influence of that which had so eaten up all virtue into the family of Finiston? She ıbered, that, in the Bible, there are ies of races which were cursed for ations because of the sins of some man; but so many had passed away the first Finiston had sinned!

o many generations, oh, my God!" May.

ı prayed out of the strength of her or the safety of her love. Rather let e sent away from her to the far end e earth, than be drawn into the hed circle round which his forefathers ravelled with weakened brains and red hearts. Take her life, take her ı, take even Paul's love out of her , but save him from the evil that helmed his kin. Having thus emp- ıer heart of every selfish thought, ge returned, and, with it, the hope as familiar to her. After all, it was ıtural that Paul should be absorbed e sudden change in his fortunes; was also natural that the old man l have grown tired of his dreary in- . It was coming then at last, the time long expected at Tobereevil; he must not be so ungrateful as to for it. Having conquered her short , she took her way bravely through ildewing house.

ıre was nothing to keep her from into any room she pleased, and ı had told her to "walk about the " The aged locks had long ago from their fastenings on the doors. wandered into noble rooms, where ents of rich hangings fluttered dolefully in the breeze which came in through the broken windows. Ceilings that had been painted in mellow pictures still showed some faded tints between the blotches of the damp and the scars where the plaster had dropped in dust to the floor. There were a few articles of weather-beaten furniture to be seen, but the rooms were mostly empty. Snow lay in heaps on the inner ledges of the windows; and the shriek of the wind went from passage to passage, and lamented along the corridors and up and down the staircases. There was but a little wind outside, but the crannies of the mansion of Tobereevil knew how to make much of a little wind. It seemed to May as if some bird of ill-omen had made his nest under the rafters of the roof, and that he flew from chamber to chamber, from garret to cellar, forever on the wing, piercing the walls with his shrill cry of wrath at the hatefulness of the misers of Tobereevil. Desolation and blight, and the print of wickedness, were everywhere. It would be better, as Paul said, to take down the old building, every stone of it.

She sat in an old, grim, carven chair, standing solitary in its corner; and she began to think for the first time of what it would be to find herself mistress of all the wealth of Tobereevil. Should she really be the lady of a great mansion, with jewels and satins, and rich furniture, and fine pictures all around her; with a library and a music-room, and drawing-rooms, and many servants? And should she be as happy in her grandeur, as in the little crooked parlor at Monasterlea? How could she know? If Paul should prove to be happy, then would she prove to be happy too?

In the mean time, uncle and nephew had retreated to the miser's den. A half-shutter had been opened, so that they might see each other, and have light to make their bargains. The old man eyed the young one by the entering ray, as keenly as the watchman who scans a doubtful wayfarer by the gleam of his dark lantern. He was looking for the signs of the spendthrift in his nephew's appearance; but Paul's dress was plain, rough frieze. The miser looked grudgingly at his comfortable clothing, but there was nothing that he could exactly complain of. Had Paul come unbidden a little time ago, he would have railed at his apparel, merely because it was not threadbare; now he only resented silently its decency and comfort. He would have threatened him for his impudence in engaging to marry a wife, but he spoke no more of May. He gathered about him such dig-

nity as he could muster, as he sat down and leaned back in his chair, and motioned to Paul to take his seat on a little broken bench, which stood at the other side of the miserable hearth. This Paul did, and was conscious all through the scene which followed, of a ridiculous and not very successful attempt to balance himself on a seat to which a fourth leg was wanting.

"You have been abroad for some years, I understand," said Simon. "Do you intend to remain here, or to return to where you came from?"

"I mean to stay at home," said Paul.

"That is, you made up your mind to it after you got my note last night."

"No, indeed," said Paul, "your note had nothing to do with it. I had made up my mind to it long ago."

"And pray what had you marked out for yourself to do? Lie in wait among the hills for the old man's death, expecting to be master of all he has?"

"To tell you the truth, sir," said Paul, throwing back his head, "there is nothing I have dreaded and disliked all my life so much as the thought of being your heir. I went abroad to forget it, and I came home in reality only to seek a wife. For various reasons I think it better now to stay where I am. I have found some employment, and I am content to be poor. If you had not sent for me you should never, as I told you, have seen my face."

"Humph!" said Simon. "Upon my word, young man, you are very bold! So you dread and dislike me, and don't want to be my heir. And what if I should show you the door in return for such a compliment?"

"I have no objection, sir: I am not anxious to stay."

And yet Paul felt himself even at the moment devoured by a new desire for the favors which this dreadful dotard held in his lean hand to give. Such ambition, however, being still new to him, an honest shame held it in check, and he still carried himself with his habitual independent bearing; but, had he been bent on pleasing the miser, he could not have spoken better.

"Very well, sir, but I have not done with you yet. It seems that there will be no courtesy lost between us: what is this employment which you have got in the country?"

"I have undertaken to manage the farm of a tenant of yours," said Paul; "and I have brought a little money home with me from abroad. Only a little, but I'll do well enough."

"Until the old man dies," sneered the miser.

"Sir!" said Paul, "I have already told you my mind. I came here to oblige you, and I will now go my way."

And he rose to his feet, burning inwardly with strange disappointment and despair. He felt that he had been made a fool of, and that he was no longer indifferent as to the old man's intentions with regard to himself. Most truly the change in him had wrought very rapidly. The shadow of his race seemed to wrap him from the light. It had descended from this old roof-tree, which he had been rash enough to place between himself and the tranquil arch of heaven; it would depart with him over this threshold, which he had been wicked enough to cross. The demon of covetousness had at last got possession of him; and peace and hope and joy were for him no more.

"Stay," said Simon. "Not so fast, young man! I do not want to fight, but to do honest business with you. I have been cheated and played upon by knaves. I want an agent to do my work among my tenants. I am at present all alone, without agent or servant; and I cannot get on alone, for people would over-reach me. So I ask you to be my agent, to manage my business for me. I will pay you something of course; but money is very scarce."

Paul's passion subsided; and he bent his brows, and considered the miser's offer. He seemed the sport of some mischievous spirit that ruled him for the hour with rapidly changing moods, whose fitful shiftings were imperceptible to himself. His pang of disappointment had vanished, and also his vision of lost contentment; and he only thought now of the value of the proposal that had been made to him. It was less than he had dreamed of while walking that morning through the Woods of Tobereevil; but, in his present hunger for power, any morsel was a boon.

"I will be glad to do my best," he answed presently.

"That is well," said the miser; "but you must work heart and soul for me: and, if you can make a little money for me, it will be better for yourself. If you serve me faithfully, and learn thrifty habits, you shall have any little penny I possess, when I die."

"Indeed, sir!" said Paul; and the idea of this heirship seemed to grow into some brilliant thing that dazzled him. His head got quite giddy, and he tingled with delight. He felt himself already the master

of Tobereevil. Only yesterday morning he had held such a title to be the least desirable in the world; but now a different humor swayed him, and he craved it as if it were life. No curse should ever hurt him. He was a strong, brave man, and he would use his power well. He had shuddered at a myth, and wasted his strength against a phantom. He had come face to face with the temptation he had so dreaded all his life, and found himself as triumphant and happy as a king.

"What now about that dread and dislike?" jeered Simon, as he watched joy start suddenly into the young man's face.

"I have changed my mind," said Paul, "but only since you have treated me like an honest man."

When the interview was over, this heir of the miser was in such a state of elation that he quite forgot May, and walked out several yards into the snow without thinking of her. And May, from an upper window, saw him thus leave the place. She was cold and tired, but she had been waiting for him patiently. Wounded and distraught, and half blind with vexed tears, she made her way through the rooms and down the staircase, pale as a ghost, and shaken with misgivings; but Paul had come back for her, and her delight at seeing this swept away the sharp bitterness of a few minutes. Paul was in wonderful excitement during all the walk home. Even May's bright spirit had to get on tiptoe to be even with him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FAGOTS BURN.

For some days every thing went on pleasantly at Monasterlea. May had doubts and fears about the bargain that had been concluded between uncle and nephew; but seeing that doubts and fears were not relished by Paul, she put them all away from her, and saw every thing in the light by which he wished her to look at it. Paul paid frequent visits to Tobereevil, and took long walks and rides over the property, making himself acquainted with the scene of his future duties; which were first to be those of servant, and afterwards those of master. The affairs of Miss Martha's farm were rather neglected for the first week or so; but the old lady was right glad to give a holiday to her new manager for any good reason he could show, and resumed her farming habits till such time as his various duties could be made to run side by side. There was no wearying, meanwhile, between the two lovers, of the joyous intercourse which they now tasted; of the blithe chatter which they carried on while roaming over hill and dale. There was no end to the leases which they granted in imagination, the comfortable cottages they built as they went along, the half-yearly debts of rent which they remitted to the long over-taxed families in which the father had broken a leg, or the mother was in a consumption. Such a thing as an eviction was to be heard of never more. And if May, in the midst of Paul's enjoyment of his make-believe power, felt a question rising like a trouble within her, "What will Simon, the miser, say to all these changes?" the words were never spoken, and the question was crushed down again in her heart, where it lay,—a little pain that would at times throb into a great one.

In the mean time the snow fell often, and the nights were frosty, and the evenings had become very delightful in the little brown parlor. Ghosts had come into season, and Nanny's stories were in fashion in the kitchen, especially of an evening, when Bridget's gossips and sweethearts had come in to lend a hand with the churning. It was just at the close of one of the short, dark days before Christmas, in the midst of a high storm, that a new and rough current came troubling the happy tide of human life at Monasterlea.

May had not gone out with Paul that morning, because it was to be a busy day with her; and a busy day it had been. There had been butter-making in the morning, and baking in the afternoon, and the surperintendence of these matters belonged to May. It was all over now, and she was expecting Paul; for Paul, as a rule, spent his evenings at Monasterlea. She was dressed in a long woollen robe of a soft plum color, with dazzling white ruffles at her throat and wrists. She was standing by the fire, with a piece of needlework in her hand; but it was too dark to work. The shifting light of flames is a pleasant light to think by, and May was in a reverie, looking at pictures in her mind, whose colors were as fair as those of a rainbow. She looked a picture herself, as the fire illumined her dark braids of hair, and all the tints and curves and dimples of her face. Even in repose, and by such light, the face looked full enough of humor and sweetness and thought, and may be passion, to make a painter's fame. She looked a woman who could make the happiness

of every creature who might come near her, but who could possibly break her heart; and even at this moment there was trouble for her in the air. The trees of Tobereevil were shrieking two miles away in the wind; and ill-luck came and knocked at the hall-door at Monasterlea.

May went quickly to the door, thinking it was Paul, and saw ill-luck standing waiting for admittance. It had a tall, buxom shape, with a riding-habit fluttering about the graceful limbs. There was some light hair streaming from a gleaming face, whose beauty shone even through the shadows which almost hid it. There was a hat somewhat maltreated by the wind and sleet, with shrunken feathers streaming after the hair. Ill-luck had come in the shape of Katherine Archbold.

If you had spoken to May an hour ago about Katherine, it would have appeared, by her answer, that she had not seen, nor heard, nor thought of that young lady for a period that seemed as long as seven years. She would have remembered that she was a person who had ruined poor Christopher; but as Christopher had written several cheerful letters of late, and seemed to be doing well, May and Paul had lately made up their minds, in their passion for poverty, that Christopher would, in the long run, be much better without his money. May would also have remembered that Katherine was a person who had laid some claim to Paul's affections, and she pitied her in this, seeing that Paul had no liking for her. It is no untruth to assert, that, for the past few weeks, she had utterly forgotten the girl's existence, so completely had May been shut up in her own rosy world; and yet here was the splendid Katherine, standing dishevelled, like a storm-sprite, at the door of her little home.

"Let me in, and don't look so amazed to see me," cried Katherine, in the light, amused tone which she had always used with May. "For goodness' sake shut the door, and give me a welcome. I think I deserve one after riding so far to see you."

"I beg your pardon," said May: "do come in to the fire. Oh, dear, how wet you are, and how splashed with snow and mud! You must change your clothes immediately. And who has come with you? There is somebody still outside in the cold."

"There is nobody," said Katherine: "I came alone."

"Alone!" echoed May. "And do your father and mother know it?"

"Perhaps, by this time," said Katherine carelessly. "But you know I never ask leave for what I do. I left a written message, which they will find, no doubt; but first they shall have a fright."

"How could you be so cruel?" burst forth May.

"There, little goody, hold your tongue! and don't scold," said Katherine, tossing off her hat. "I choose to punish every one who tyrannizes over me. They are very safe, since they find I have not drowned myself, nor eloped with some bog-trotter, as they will have been wise enough to suppose. In the mean time, are you going to be my enemy, or my friend?"

"Your friend," said May; "and I have no right to scold you, nor to pry into your affairs. Of course, I think you wrong; but I also think you wet and tired: and your horse? Did any one take your horse?"

Katherine laughed. "I let him go at the gate," said she; "and he will trot back to Camlough."

"And terrify your parents?"

"Probably," replied Katherine. "For Heaven's sake, don't stare so! but get me some dry clothes, as you said you would. They will send me some things presently, but I have brought nothing with me."

May said no more, but led her unexpected visitor away to her own chamber. It was the very same room in which she had dressed her once before, when they were children. It was the most whimsical room in the house, all nooks and angles, and from its sloping ceiling and the many twists in its walls, was peculiarly well suited to show off the gambols of the goblins which firelight will set capering. It had been made out of a bit of an old sacristy; and there was a rather grim and sorrowful ghost of a sculptured crucifix in bas-relief on the wall, all chipped, and almost worn away by time; besides some cherubs' heads with curly locks and round cheeks, broken noses and pouting lips, clustered under the slantings in the corners of the ceiling. In the midst of these relics, flourished all the little niceties which a girl loves to gather round her in her own particular sanctum. The guest having been arrayed in the prettiest gown the hostess possessed, and placed in a comfortable chair at the hearth, May went down on her knees to make the fire burn more brightly. Bridget brought fresh fuel, and took a message to Miss Martha.

"Allow me," said Katherine; and she took the little bundles of sticks from Bridget's hand, and fed the flames with them, from time to time, as she talked. May sat on the hearth-rug, and listened to her talking.

"You wonder, I suppose, what brought me away from home in such a hurry, and what made me come here to give my company to you? You are dying with curiosity, and yet you are too polite to ask."

Here Katherine cast a stick upon the blazing fire.

"You see, my father and mother have pleased themselves to be angry with me. They are quite out of humor because I wish to amuse myself. It is beyond all reason, their wanting to dictate to me. They sulked at me for a week about that Christopher. By the way, he came here, and made a fuss, did he not?"

"He came here and nearly died," said May.

Katherine shrugged her shoulders, and looked complacent; and another stick was tossed into the flames.

"Well, I can't help it. If people will be so silly, I am not to be held accountable. It was a pity to lose the money, but I did not think of that. People begin to think of money when they grow a little older. When one has had all that one could fancy, it is not easy to learn prudence; and Sir John and Lady Archbold need not try to teach me now. I could not bring them to their senses without giving them a fright. They shall be frightened for twelve hours; till my maid shall find a letter, as if by the merest chance: and then they will send my trunks. They shall be very anxious to see me before they get me back again."

May was silent. With all her wish to be hospitable, she could not find in her heart that she was glad of the chance that had brought Miss Archbold to Monasterlea. Katherine, meantime, fed the flames with a lavish hand; and the fire leaped and burned with a good roar in the chimney: and May looked up, and suddenly saw that the sticks which the visitor held in her lap were those very wicked fagots which she herself had hidden out of sight, and forgotten. It was not at all wonderful that Bridget should have found them, and turned them to account; but May did not like to see them in Katherine's hands. A strange fit of superstitious bewilderment came upon her; she saw impish spirits dancing through the flames, and clambering up the smoke-ladders, and mocking at her as if they had overreached her. Turning her eyes from the fire, she saw Katherine's defiant face shining through the glamor made by the upspringing of the flames, and the down-pressing of the shadows around her glittering, golden head. At the same moment she heard the muffled sound of Paul's voice and steps in the outer hall. The sound seemed dim and far away, and did not break cheerfully upon the strange mood that had befallen her. Instead of that, it mixed itself up with a sense of approaching danger which she was powerless to avert. The danger had come with Katherine, and was wrapped up in her; belonged to Katherine, and would work through her. She was the instrument of all the evil that was, in truth, haunting Paul. She had come as ill-luck to Monasterlea.

Sympathy with Paul's troubles was making May superstitious. She was attacked by this terror as by a fit of sudden sickness, and, making an effort to shake it off, sprang up kneeling on the hearth.

"Hark!" said Katherine, dropping the fagots, and holding up her jewelled finger. "There is the lover. Is he not the lover? How angry you were that day when I showed you to yourself! How you denied my penetration! Well, was I not right? Has not all that I predicted come to pass?"

"No," said May, "you were altogether wrong."

"Hey-day! What is that? Are you not engaged to the handsome Paul?"

"Yes; but I would rather not talk about it."

"Get away with you!" said Katherine. "You are as prim as an old maid. When are you to be married?"

"Oh, I do not know! there is much to be done first."

"Is there, indeed? And you are both good and patient?"

"We are both very happy," said May, simply.

"How nice to be looking on at such a pretty pair of lovers!" said Katherine. "So patient and so happy, in spite of a long, long engagement with a vague, vague ending! That is what I shall be doing while I am here. It will interest me extremely. You must introduce me to your Paul. I shall be civil to him for your sake, and he will like me I dare say. Perhaps, he will remember having seen me before."

"He remembers you," said May mechanically, with her eyes on a half-burnt fagot between the bars.

"Oh! he told you so when you repeated to him all that folly which I talked about him at Camlough."

An involuntary look of disgust crept for a moment into May's eyes. It did not escape Katherine, nor was she likely to forget it when it presently disappeared.

"You are mistaken in me," said May. "I could not so betray any one."

"Ah! that is good of you. Primness, I see, sometimes does one a service. I re-

member now that I made you promise to forget that conversation."

"I have a better memory than you."

"You have a better every thing, my dear, except physique and self-will. I yield to no one in beauty; and I have a talent for having my own way, which amounts to genius. You shall see it in full working before I have been here long."

May looked up brightly, and laughed at her audacity, which, she yet knew very well, was not a merry jest. After all, this was no unearthly creature of unhallowed powers not to be baffled; but only wild Katherine Archbold. It was her nature to do mischief where she could: but May had a subtle power of her own, of which she was not all unconscious; and she would not fear any other woman on earth, were that other woman incarnate beauty itself. Something of this Katherine found in the speaking, dark eyes. So she became more offensive.

"Are you desperately in love with your fine Paul?" she asked.

"I don't dislike him," said May.

"Bah!" said Katherine, provoked. "As if I did not know that you are a soft little fool, ready to love anybody!"

May colored. "Not anybody," she said; "not you, for instance."

"Oh, she has lost her temper at last! Not me? Well, look here. I will make a bargain with you. You begin to love me with all your might, and I will give you this pretty ring. It is worth a hundred guineas."

The diamonds flashed in the light of the blazing fagots as Katherine held the ring poised on the end of her little finger.

May put her hands behind her back. "Keep it," she said. "I am too poor to give you even the wretched price you ask for it."

Katherine frowned and smiled. "I always knew you were obstinate," she said; "but you are sharper than I thought you."

There was a sudden silence between the two girls. It was as if both had understood that there had been more under their words than either had to utter. Again the firelight played its pranks about the guest's golden head, and threw strange meanings into her eyes, and laid ominous touches upon her mouth; and again the superstitious, unaccountable terror of approaching harm gathered round May's heart, till a welcome household sound in the passage broke the spell, and she felt ashamed of herself.

"Come!" she said, "we are a silly pair to stay here sparring at one another. Don't you think we had better go, and be sociable in the parlor? My aunt is waiting for us, and I want to present you to Mr Finiston."

"Wait!" said Katherine. She had lighted the only remaining stick of the wicked fagots. She held the blazing wood in her hand, and watched it burn away slowly towards her fingers, while a lurking smile played about the corners of her mouth. "I am reading your future. I am looking to see whether you will be married to your Paul. If the burnt part breaks and drops away before the flame reaches my finger it is the breaking of your engagement. Watch, watch! It is gone!"

The piece of red charcoal had dropped on the hearth. Katherine tossed the burning morsel that remained into the fire. The flames dropped in the grate, and the room was in darkness.

"Don't be a goose!" said May, and opened the door into the lighted passage.

But Katherine was not accustomed to be called a goose.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MISS ARCHBOLD'S TRUNKS ARRIVE.

THERE is a secret now to be told which must be whispered low, for the winds may not hear that Sir John Archbold, the wealthy, was fast becoming impoverished; that his princely magnificence and hospitality had brought the once overflowing contents of his purse to a low ebb; and that his own extravagance, helped by that of his wife, and especially that of his daughter, now threatened to sweep him to ruin unless some speedy change were effected in the management of his affairs. His pride could not brook confession to the world,—the world that had visited at his palace of delight, built up amongst mountains which his will alone had made accessible to man. He had seated luxury on a throne on the very summit of the wilderness; and now the thought of falling from his eyry, and building himself a lower nest, was like the bitterness of death. Sickening with such bitterness, he had tolerated the wooing of his child by Christopher Lee; for money was great and desirable in his eyes. Katherine, however, had chosen to dismiss Christopher; and she must now be warned of the shallowness of that purse which she had hitherto believed to be deep as the Atlantic. The secret of the decadence of the Camlough wealth was whispered to her fearfully by the now unhappy mother, who had reared her to be selfish and greedy, and

without heart. To this mother's whisper, there had succeeded a storm: such a tempest had shaken the house of Archbold as had never yet been let loose upon it out of the clouds and caves of the upper mountains; and, whilst the storm was raging, Sir John took occasion to announce his intention of staying at Camlough all the year, without going to London, as usual, for the season. He would hide himself in his fastnesses on pretence of making improvements, and ponder the means of saving the splendor of his fame. Meanwhile he would only have such visitors as it might please him to invite. Katherine must content herself with simplicity and seclusion; for the gloom of fear had made the father stern towards this daughter, who had almost worn out his affection by the constant display of her selfishness and folly.

Now, Katherine's newest whim had been to pay a visit, uninvited, to Monasterlea. Miss Martha was amazed at the young lady's condescension and friendliness, and remarked to Paul that it was quite wonderful to see how some people would turn out well, no matter how the world tried to spoil them. As for that story about Christopher, she had long since thought that the poor girl had been blamed very unfairly. Why should she have been bound to marry Christopher? May had found it very hard to be asked to do so in order to save the young man's fortune, and she had no doubt that Katherine had found it every bit as hard. One could not form a just opinion upon any matter of the kind until one had thought about it a little, and heard both sides of the story. And Aunt Martha, when she saw Katherine's beautiful face in her parlor, asking a welcome with beseeching smiles, thought that she had at last ample evidence that Miss Archbold had been hardly used.

"It proves to me, my dear, that we ought not to be too hasty," she said to May. "We ought not to blame any one."

"I do not say a word against her," said May. And she doubled up her little fist under her apron with the mighty effort to control her tongue.

These remarks were interchanged in the hall, as Miss Martha, who had stepped out for the express purpose of thus relieving her feelings, met May bearing towards the parlor that antique silver teapot which was the pride of her aunt's heart, followed by Bridget swaying under a tray of good things which might have nourished a small family for a week. May, entering with her teapot, found Paul and Katherine sitting on either side of the hearth, as friendly as possible, and engaged in lively conversation. Katherine was laughing gayly; and Paul was looking very well pleased, seeing that he had succeeded so thoroughly in amusing a pretty and witty woman. The visitor was looking dazzling after her madcap ride, glowing and glittering with all that bewildering light and color which made her beauty so fascinating. All traces of the half-satirical vein of humor which she could show to May had vanished. Her manner to Paul and Miss Martha was gentle, admiring, winning, and deferential, whilst her brilliant chatter brimmed with wit, and her readiness to be amused was surprising and delightful. May was scarcely suffered to add a mite to the conversation; for Katherine had a trick of stealing the words from her mouth before they were spoken, and of gracefully throwing ridicule over every remark which she permitted her to make. Yet this was done so cleverly, that nobody but May felt its meaning or its persistency.

May bore it patiently and with good humor. Here, in Paul's presence, the superstitious sense of uneasiness could not touch her. She was thoroughly satisfied with Paul's love for herself, and did not fear for a moment that any man or woman could destroy or even weaken their mutual tenderness and trust; so she laughed with Katherine at every jest that was turned against herself, and submitted to play the simpleton with a very lovely grace. The little parlor rang with merriment that evening. Katherine mimicked everybody, visitors, servants, peasants, and aristocrats, giving vivid pictures of various phases of life. It was only when the play was played out, and her voice hushed for the night, that one might remember, in the quietness which succeeded, the vein of unmerciful harshness and contempt which had run through her representations of human nature.

The next morning Paul came to breakfast; and May, as was usual on such occasions, went tripping over the snow to meet him. Paul's high spirits still endured. He had not had a fit of gloom since he had become agent to the miser. Naturally the conversation turned upon Katherine.

"She is a beautiful creature!" said Paul.

"She is very beautiful," said May.

"And friendly," said Paul. "She remembers quite freshly every circumstance of my former acquaintance with her. There was so little of it one would think she might have forgotten. With all her flatterers and admirers, of whom we have heard so much, one would hardly expect

that she could have a lively recollection of an insignificant fellow like me."

"Paul," said May, with a sudden and passionate impulse, "don't let her push me out of your heart. Little and poor as I am, I can be more to you than she could be."

"My darling," said Paul, surprised, "you might as well ask me with that wistful face not to give myself over to the Evil One. You will not let me stray away from you? This little hand, though small, will hold me."

"I do not know that," said May. "If I saw you willing to go I don't think I could bring myself to hold you."

"You could," said Paul, "and it would be as much your duty as if you were already my wedded wife. No marriage vow can bind us to each other more solemnly than we are bound: but of one thing be certain,—my heart has no room to spare for any woman besides yourself. Miss Archbold is beautiful and charming in a wonderful degree, but she is the last woman in the world whom I could associate with a thought of tenderness. You had much better be jealous of your good Aunt Martha."

"I used to think that I could not be jealous," said May; "but now I fear that I could, if it were not that I so utterly hate and despise the feeling."

"Hate and despise it more," said Paul, "though that is scarcely worth your while; for I swear to you that provocation shall never come in your way. We want one another, my love, and divided we could not thrive. I, at least, want you. Any thing that parted us would be the sure and complete ruin of Paul Finiston. Then, indeed, would the curse have its will of me. I should go down to destruction just as certainly as any Finiston of them all."

"You must not think that," said May; but instinctively she tightened her hold upon his arm.

May was used to this kind of talk, and she had ceased to be frightened at it. She believed very earnestly in the mystery of the Finistons, and the idea was a rapture to her that she was thus strong in her weakness to be a safeguard to Paul. Yet on this special morning there was something that pressed on her with a vague fear of danger; and somehow, despise it as she would, the uneasiness was associated with Katherine. The thought of jealousy was indeed a folly to her, and it was not jealousy that she now felt. The fear was not of sorrow nor of disappointment for herself, but of harm for Paul, through whom alone she could be made to suffer. She had no separate interests, no selfish feelings to be hurt, no pride to be wounded, no vanity to be stung. She felt herself indeed a part of Paul. There was something in the idea of the possibility of their being separated, as put forth by him at this moment, whilst her own mind was troubled, that struck her with unusual sharpness; as if, indeed, there had been some invisible and unholy power, the strength of which was pitted against them, striving to tear them asunder. In the deathly quiet of the winter morning they stood still upon the road and looked in each other's face. The Woods of Tobereevil lay in gaunt masses before their eyes, frowning out of a ragged shroud of snow. In the snow-time the old legend always seemed more real than at any other moment, and there was always a ghastliness upon the country while the white sheeting covered the wicked trees and their roots. The "awful babe of death," and his frozen mother, seemed to lie stark and stiff under every snow-wreath; and it was easy to imagine that the feeble shred of smoke from one chimney of the mansion ascended at that moment from the blighted hearth-place of the first Paul Finiston. May locked her hands together upon Paul's supporting arm, and her eyes flashed defiance at the ranks of the wicked woods.

"I tell you," she said, as the flame softened in her eyes, when they met Paul's gaze, "be they men, women, or demons, they shall tear me in little pieces before I loose my hold of you!"

After that the mood of both changed, and they returned to Monasterlea as merry as two children. Katherine had not all the wit to herself at the breakfast-table; for May's tongue was so loosened by joy that it did clever work just as prettily as any innocent tongue that ever yet sent music out of a woman's smiling mouth.

After breakfast Bridget announced that a travelling-carriage was on its way down the road to Monasterlea. Aunt Martha vanished to put on her afternoon cap, Katherine was in her room, and May received Lady Archbold in the cottage parlor.

"My daughter is here?" she said eagerly, looking in May's face.

"Yes," said May, "since yesterday in the evening."

Lady Archbold was relieved. Her child at least was safe; but now that her fears were allayed, the uneasiness that she had suffered showed itself in irritation and anger.

"You should not have taken her in; you ought not to have kept her," she said. "Why did not your aunt send her home to me at once?"

We never thought of such a thing. : could not have done it. The night ; wild, and think of the distance!"

Lady Archbold moaned a little, and ing her hands slowly as she held down storm of her indignation. She looked with her feverish glance, and saw a symhy in May's eyes which invited her to ak.

"Katherine is not good to me," she said; Katherine is not good to me. Now, proe me that you will never repeat this to one in the world."

"I promise," said May; "but, Lady chbold, don't be hard upon her. You e spoiled her a little, I dare say." And y took part with Katherine in pity to poor mother who was blaming her.

"Ah, that is it, but she might at least ember that it was our love for her that it. I would give the heart out of my om, if she only would love me, and be ttle tender with her mother. Look at young girl! I was as proud as the y eagles in the mountains; and yet love her has brought me to this, that I am mpering here to you like the beggar t comes to your gate. I reared her, and ioned her to be a fit wife for a prince; I would give her cheerfully to the rest gentleman that ever yet loved her, portion her with every penny and l I possess, if she would only show one warm spot in her breast where I at live and find comfort for the remain- of my days. But, oh me! how she nds this poor aching heart!"

She does not mean it," said May, still ding for the mother's heart rather for the daughter. "She will be when you talk to her. She is wilful impulsive, but she will be wiser by by."

Ah, you do not know her. By and shall grow as cold and indifferent he is. I shall be harsh with her, for will have turned all my love into bitess; but she will soon be freed from for I shall die. In the mean time, I e here to bring her back with me to ilough."

I am afraid she will not go," said May, wing that Katherine had a great mind ay at Monasterlea.

Ah, will not go!" panted Lady Arch- . "Perhaps, Miss Mourne, you symize with her in this. Perhaps you to keep her against my will. You repent it if you do. Mind, I say to you shall repent it!"

I do not sympathize with her," said ; "nor wish to keep her; but if she insists on staying, we cannot drive her away."

"But you ought to drive her away," flashed forth Lady Archbold, whose passion rose against opposition. "You have a lover, I am told; and you had better look to it. You will not stand beside my Katherine. If you persist in keeping her by you, your lover will not be your lover many days. She will delight in taking him from you, in breaking both his heart and yours."

May grew a little pale at the coarse way in which so sacred a subject was handled.

"I don't think that will be in her power," she said.

"You think so, do you? Well, I have warned you to keep watch over your property."

"Lady Archbold," said May, "you do not understand me. I shall neither watch nor fear."

"You are a fool," said Lady Archbold; "a great fool, but an honest one. Oh me, oh me! Will not my child come to speak to me?"

"She does not know you are here," said May. "I will go at once and send her to you." And she hurried away, leaving the mother rocking herself sorrowfully in her chair, and making again that slow wringing movement with her hands, as if she would force back the tide of bitterness that was always seething in her breast.

May went and knocked at Katherine's door.

"Lady Archbold is here, and wants to see you."

"Lady Archbold already! Nonsense. Well, we must allow that the old lady has been pretty active. I shall go to her presently, when I have finished dressing my hair. I wonder what she has come for."

"She hopes you will return with her," said May.

"Then her hopes are vain, my dear, for you are not going to get rid of me so quickly. Your good Aunt Martha has invited me to stay here as long as it suits my humor; and it very much suits my humor to take advantage of her kindness: so you may tell Lady Archbold, without waiting till I am ready, that she can trot the fat horses back to Camlough when she likes;" and Katherine swept a glittering braid upward as she spoke, and added its weight to the golden coronet which she was building on her head.

"I cannot take that message," said May. "I should go to her at once if I were you."

"But you are not me," said Katherine with complacency; and she surveyed May all over with a slight sweeping glance, and with a faint smile upon her lip, as if to say, "How audacious to suggest such a comparison!" "However, I will go to her now; and I will beg of you to have my trunks carried here in the mean time."

"I believe there are no trunks," said May: "I have not seen any."

"No trunks!" cried Katherine; and her brows lowered, and an expression of rude anger gloomed out, and extinguished the beauty in her face. "I think Lady Archbold would not come here without the trunks."

But evidently she admitted the idea that the trunks had not been brought, for her face did not brighten as she took her way to the parlor.

The door was closed upon mother and daughter. By and by sounds were heard from the room; echoes of voices speaking in high-pitched tones, vibrating with passion. Afterwards there was silence, and then low murmurs and sobbing. Aunt Martha came creeping softly into her niece's room.

"May, this is dreadful! That harsh, haughty woman will break that bright young creature's heart. Only to hear the poor child sobbing through the wall?"

"Are you sure it is she who is sobbing?" asked May.

"My dear, come into the store-room, and believe your own ears. I have been there making some custard, and it is all curdled with the excitement."

"Well, aunty, the poor lady was in great trouble when I left her; and she wants her daughter to go home."

"Home, indeed! Don't tell me! Does a girl run away from home when she is treated there with gentleness? Did you ever run away from here? Just answer me that! A proud, hard woman, not fit to bring up a daughter."

"If the mother wants to take her, I don't see how you can keep her."

"But I will keep her; that is, if she is anxious to stay with me. Let the mother go home, and cool her temper a little. The girl has asked me for shelter, and I promise you she shall get it."

As Miss Martha spoke, the parlor door opened violently, and Lady Archbold made her way rapidly down the garden path to her carriage. Miss Martha thanked Heaven, and went back to her store-room; and May met Katherine returning to her chamber. There were two red spots on the young lady's cheeks, but her eyes were dry and bright. It was not she who had wept so piteously as to spoil Miss Martha's custard. The eyes that had shed the tears were still weeping themselves blind as they were hurried along through the snow back to Camlough.

The next day Katherine's trunks did actually arrive, laden with the costly and beautiful raiment in which Miss Archbold loved to deck herself. Miss Martha marvelled not a little when she saw their number and proportions; and Bridget's head was completely turned for a whole week by the visions of grandeur which dazzled her eyes whilst she was engaged in making up Miss Archbold's room.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PAUL'S TROUBLES BEGIN.

DAYS passed, and Katherine had dom[illegible]esticated herself thoroughly at Monaster[illegible]ea. She had taken possession of all the b[illegible]est things in the house with the most charm[illegible]ng good-will. The prettiest and most comf[illegible]rtable furniture had been carried into [illegible]er room, and she had the warmest seat at [illegible]he fire and at the table. The little red co[illegible]ch under the black archway in the par[illegible]or, which was covered with Miss Martl[illegible]a's knitting, and cushioned with pill[illegible]ws stuffed with down off Miss Martha's o[illegible]wn geese, she had at once made quite her o[illegible]wn. She had taken possession of Bridget, so that the hand-maiden did little besi[illegible]des attend upon Miss Archbold. The vis[illegible]tor had also her hostess in thorough sub[illegible]ection; and she wrought her will pretty fr[illegible]ely upon May, in spite of that young la[illegible]y's rebellion against the tyranny of her rul[illegible].

But Katherine's attentions were chi[illegible]fly devoted to Paul, and to no one else did she care to be agreeable. All through the dark winter days, in the quiet little cottage, she was restless and troublesome, and sorely tried the patience of her entertainers; but, when the evening brought Paul, her mood was sure to change. She took as much pains to amuse May's lover as though her life had depended on his being merry; and Paul was glad to be amused, though he did not like Katherine.

He did not like Katherine, and yet it was certain that she exercised an extraordinary influence over his actions. She absorbed his attention, in spite of his dissatisfaction and unwillingness to gratify her. She exacted from him a hundred

little marks of homage, such as May had never looked for, nor thought of. He became so busy with her, and so tormented by her, that he soon found he had very little time to attend to his business. He became curiously changed in a short space of time, his temper alternating between bursts of anger at himself and her, indulged in generally during the hours of his absence from her side, and unreasoning fits of mirth, which almost invariably took possession of him whilst in her presence, and left bitterness of heart and exhaustion of body when they passed away.

Meanwhile May stood aside patiently, not wondering that the brilliant beauty should be found more amusing and attractive than herself. She stifled her heartache, for was she not sure of Paul's love? And why need she be jealous and ungenerous and unkind? Tender trust such as Paul felt in her was a thousand times more precious than the admiration of a moment. Therefore she would be tolerant, and await, however longingly, the happy hour when Katherine should take her way back to Camlough; but as weeks went by, and Paul's strange unhappiness increased, all thought of her own pain passed away, and keen fear for his welfare caused her a misery far more sharp than she had yet suffered. It was but a short time since he had begged her to save him from any thing that should look to her like the beginning of that evil which he believed to lie in wait for him; and it seemed to her now that it was time to be up and doing for his sake.

One night the three young people were sitting late [illegible] the fire. The keeping of late hours [illegible] one of the changes which Katherine had introduced into the house. She loved to amuse herself a long way into the night, though the servants grumbled, and even Miss Martha was dissatisfied. The mild old lady had been obliged to yield the point. She might go to bed herself when her eyes could not keep open, but midnight often found the three young heads bent together over the fire. May on such occasions would be as merry as her guest. She would have laugh for laugh, and jest for jest with Katherine; and she would not be [illegible]rtened even when she found that Paul would listen to the stranger, and would give little heed to her.

"Tell me about Tobereevil," said Katherine to Paul. "I have heard scraps of the history but I want to know it all. There must be a better time for an uncomfortably."

Paul hesitated, as he gloomily prepared to comply with her request. He went steadily through the whole of the wild tale, passing from one strange hero to another amongst his ancestors, till he finished with Simon, the present terror of the country.

"Oh, dear!" said Katherine, when he had done, "and you are the next of kin. Why, the end of it is that you will be the richest man in Ireland."

"That is it," said Paul; "and there will not be many wealthier elsewhere. I have lately been calculating the old man's wealth. Think of the accumulation during many hundreds of years!"

He said this with his brow bent, and his eyes on the fire, and a look in his face which May had never seen there before.

"What is this old man like?" asked Katherine, who had lost all her levity, and become for once grave and earnest. "Is he very old? Is he in good health? Is he likely to die soon."

"That is as may be," said Paul grimly. "He may live long enough unless some one interfere to help him out of the world before his time. You know, it is on the cards that I, being his kinsman, may do him that good office."

"But you could never be so silly!" cried Katherine eagerly. "You would be probably found out; and, if you did escape punishment, there would still be a great deal of trouble and unpleasantness. Besides, if you are of a superstitious turn of mind, as I strongly suspect you to be, it might interfere with the enjoyment of your happiness."

"That is true,' said Paul dryly. "It is a view of the matter which I did not take before; but then — suppose I turn into a miser, and some bolder kinsman comes forward, and murders me? It might be wiser to take the thing into my own hands."

"Nonsense!" said Katherine. "I forbid you to ruin yourself by any thing so silly. Have a little patience, and don't believe in bogies. The old man will die, and you will get possession of all the wealth. You will leave this mouldy place, and become a great man in England, where taste and money are appreciated. You are cultivated and accomplished. You can have your will of all the good things of the world. You may marry the handsomest woman of your time — but oh, I forgot! I beg your pardon!" and Katherine glanced at May, and laughed in make-believe confusion.

But May was bravely at her post, and outlaughed her.

"Go on, please," she said blithely. "Go

on, and finish the story. We must let nothing interfere with the hero's grandeur. You must wed him to a princess — unless, indeed, you can find an unmarried queen. You are bound not to stop until you have placed him on a throne."

"I am bound to no such thing!" said Katherine pettishly. "And he shall not go on a throne, for kings are wretched creatures."

"Well," said May, "that does not prove that your hero may not be a king. You have not done any thing for him yet to prevent his being a very wretched creature; but all I say is this, that I hope he will be allowed to look after his poor subjects in these parts. There is a long account due to them from the forefathers of his majesty. We will include the settling of this amongst the pleasures you have mentioned."

Katherine laughed a cynical laugh. "No, indeed!" she said, "no such thing! My hero shall send Tobereevil to the hammer. He shall fly from this land of beggars and of bogs. He shall revel in his inheritance, not squander it for nothing."

"We talk about 'my hero,' and 'my hero,'" said May smilingly; "but the heir of Tobereevil must declare for himself. Let him speak, and say if he will turn his back upon his people."

Both bright pairs of eyes were turned on Paul, May's with more eagerness and anxiety lurking in them than their owner cared that they should betray. Paul grew troubled and embarrassed under their gaze.

"I don't know," he said: "I am not prepared to declare; but I am not sure that the wisest plan for the future master of Tobereevil would not be to get rid of the whole thing, and leave the curse and the woods to rot or flourish as they please."

May grew pale; but she answered readily, before Katherine had time to speak.

"Well, there will be time enough to decide when the right moment comes. In the mean while, is it not time that this meeting should break up?"

And the meeting did break up. Katherine had achieved triumph enough to last her for one night, and went singing down the cloisters to her chamber. She sang her light song while she unbound her golden hair, and put off her jewels and her laces and her gown of glittering silk; and she fell asleep smiling, and dreamt that May was weeping at her door, but she would not let her in. Yet May was not weeping, only lying awake in pain with wide-open eyes and fiercely throbbing heart; for tears could not save Paul, however strength and courage might.

All the courage was needed, and needed yet more urgently as days and weeks went on. The change in Paul became more marked, and Katherine's subtle power gathered closer round him, while her cunning boldness kept him farther out of the reach of May's wholesome influence. Her conversation ran upon money and power, upon the folly of a man's not enjoying whatever he could touch, upon the uselessness of so-called benevolent endeavors to do good to one's fellow-creatures; and every hour Paul showed a more restless impatience to possess the inheritance which the miser had promised should be his. His temper was altered; every flickering shadow had become a sombre cloud, every gleam of his old good humor appeared only under the guise of a feverish hilarity. Katherine amused him with stories of the gay world where people did what they pleased without trouble about duty, and in perfect freedom from the thraldom of what stupid people call conscience. She showed him that life in such a dreary corner of the world as this was no better than that of the mole in the earth; that gayety and excitement and luxury were the only things that made existence worth having. And when Katherine talked, she banished the devil of gloom that tormented his soul, but only that when she had ceased seven others might enter in and take possession of it while May became like some pale spirit hovering on the threshold of this dwelling, which had been her own, and kept aloof by the demons that had driven her out.

It had taken three strange months to bring things to this point, and one bleak day in March Katherine took a fancy to walk out by herself, away from Monasterlea, and towards the Woods of Tobereevil. It was a gray morning, with a cold and seathing wind; but Katherine was healthy and strong, and clad so as to defy the bitter weather. She was all wrapped up in furs, and carried a gay hat and feathers upon her head. As she walked along the road, people courtesied to her, and looked after her; for her beauty shone dazzlingly in the chill of the colorless day.

It seemed to amuse her to be out thus alone, and on an errand of her own; for she laughed pleasantly to herself as she went along. She sometimes looked behind her, but she did not stop at all till she had come to the entrance of the Tobereevil Woods; then she stood still and gazed at them. Katherine Archbold had not the least share of superstition or of poetry in her nature; yet her mind, as she gazed at the trees, was filled with the recollection of

their origin: but she had no
the cruelty of the wholesale
had driven their roots into the
as not troubled about freezing
l babes, and famished men.
only of the success of these
s, which had so forced their
e sad, reluctant land, covering
with their mighty limbs. She
admiration for any thing that
ied, and she gloried in the
ne trees.
azed at them, she dived in
em, walking over the meek
d never seeing the young vio-
lunged into the thickets, and
elf by forcing her way through
ood, fighting with stubborn
s barred her way, delighted
uld break them, and trample
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ner way, in spite of them, con-
f into certain of their fastness-
nan footstep seldom made its
ound a pillared chamber of
e the sun could never shine,
radual spread of whose impen-
he faithful light of the stars
e by one put out. Perpetual
gned in this spot, and there
aseless sound of disturbance;
f swaying miles of wood sur-
d below in continual thunder.
dest airs of heaven seemed to
stings, which goaded the To-
ls unceasingly into motion and
darkness and confusion were
this solitary dungeon, which
d made for themselves. It
meeting-place for evil spirits.
proved of it, and, in order to
, took her seat on a fallen
hich she had stumbled.

HAPTER XXIX.

CONGENIAL SOULS.

HE had not been long in this
e spot when she heard a sound
ss as she was, caused her a
hock. To hear a footstep in
as startling. Yet there was
underwood to be detected
on the surface of the
Her eyes, being now
ness, distinguished the
man's form which was grop-
ing its way amongst the bushes. Presently a scream from the new-comer announced fear at the glimmer of Miss Archbold's white furs. The figure fell and cowered on the ground; and Katherine amused herself for some minutes with the terrors of this unknown and silly wretch. Then she touched the prostrate body with the toe of her little boot.

"Get up quickly," she said, "whoever you may be!"

The creature, an old woman, revived at the human voice, and gathered herself grotesquely into a sitting posture. They could see each other now, however dimly. Katherine looked like some beautiful fairy, who had chosen for no good end to pay a visit to this spot: the other like some witch in her familiar haunt; for the old woman was ugly, and she was weird. In short, she was Tibbie.

"I know ye now!" she cried: "I know ye now! Ye're Sir John Archbold's daughter from beyant the mountain. Many a time I have heard o' the beauty o' yer face, an' the hardness o' yer heart. I know ye by yer hair; for though my eyes is not good, I can see the glint o't. I took ye for an angel, an' I'm not good company for the angels — not till my son Con's someway settled to his property. When Simon gives him his rights, then I'll settle to goodness; but people can't get their wills wid the grace o' God about them. An' I'm bound to get my will whosomedever lends me a hand."

"Come," said Katherine, "this is interesting. My dear wise woman, I thank you for your compliments, and I am delighted to make your acquaintance. You thought you had something good, and you find you have something naughty; so you become quite friendly, and tell me your secrets. Nothing could please me more. It gives me intense pleasure to meet with people who intend to have their will. And who is your boy Con? — and what is he to Simon?"

She knew the story well, but chose to hear it from Tibbie.

"He's my sister's own son, an' Simon's nephew," she said. "An' I've swore an oath on my knees that he shall be master o' Tobereevil. There was a will that was nearly signed whin Paul Finiston he cut in an' turned us out o' doors. I've been years starvin' yonder wid the black-beetles an' the rats; an' I'm bound to have my reward. I'll get back to his kitchen, an' I'll put my boy into Paul's shoes. I've been begging on the hills; but it's little I'll think o' that when I've got the money-bags in my clutches;

an' I'm come this way through the woods in hopes o' meetin' somethin' wicked that'd help me. There do be devils an' bad spirits always livin' in the threes — I'm not afraid o' them if they'd give me a han'; but I'm mortal feared o' the angels, for they might keep me from my will."

Katherine looked at the creature with admiration. Where in all the land could she meet with any thing so congenial as this hag, who had thus avowed a purpose which had made them enemies at once? "For I," thought Katherine, "have determined that Paul Finiston shall be master of Tobereevil, and I am resolved to have my will. And this creature is also bent upon forcing fate, so that her Con shall take his place. Yet we shall be friends, in spite of this little difference."

"My dear soul," said she, "sit down on this stump and tell me all about it. I am anxious to hear your plans. What do you mean to do in order to ruin Paul Finiston?"

"I would not tell you," said Tibbie, "only that I know you are hard-hearted. If I thought you soft an' good, I wouldn't open my lips to ye, not if ye prayed me on yer knees. For Paul Finiston's the sort that women likes."

"But he is a fool," said Katherine, "an impostor, and a beggar, who must be turned by the shoulders out of the country."

Tibbie crowed, and clapped her hands with delight. "Oh, musha!" she cried, "you have the purty tongue in your head."

"How do you mean to do it?" asked Katherine. "Don't be afraid to tell me, for there is no one within miles of us. Shall you give him a taste of nightshade, or a little hemlock-tea?"

"No," said Tibbie doubtfully, as if the idea had not startled her, but was familiar to her mind. "I have thought o' that, an' thought o't, an' I'll thry another way. I'll do it by a charm. An' that's what brought me here to-day. There's roots that does be growin' in divil's places like this; an' if ye can catch them, an' keep them, ye may do any thing ye like."

"Roots!" said Katherine. "And what do you do with them?"

"Some needs wan doin', an' some another," said Tibbie. "The best of all is a mandhrake, for that's a divil in itsel'. It looks like a little man, and ye hang it up in a corner, where it can see ye walkin' about. So long as ye threat it well, it'll bring ye the luck o' the world. I go sarchin' through every bad place in the woods, and on the mountains, turnin' up the stones, and glowerin' under the bushes, hopin' to find a mandhrake that'll do my will. If I can find him, oh, honey! won't I make my own o' the miser? I'll make the keys dance out o' his pockets, and the money-bags dance out o' the holes he has hid them in, an' the goold jump out o' the bags into Tibbie's pockets. I'll make him burn the will that has Paul in it, an' write out another that'll put Con in his place. I'll have all my own way; an' the ould villain may break his heart and die widout me needin' to lift a hand against him."

"Capital!" cried Katherine; "but where will you find the mandrake? Are you sure that it grows in this country at all? And suppose it does, don't you know that to suit your purpose it must spring from a murderer's grave? Then, even when it is found, there is danger in getting possession of it. It screams when its root is torn from the earth, and the shriek kills the person who plucks it."

Tibbie's face fell as she listened. "You're larnder nor me," she said. "An' are ye tellin' me the thruth?"

"Certainly, the truth," said Katherine.

Tibbie lifted up her voice, and howled with disappointment. "Every thin's against me," she said, rocking herself dismally; "but I'm not goin' to be baffled. I'll cross the says if ye'll tell me the country where it'll be found. I'll get somebody to pluck it for me that'll not know the harm; for I tell ye that I am bound to get my will."

Katherine stood looking on, while the creature thus bemoaned herself.

"There, now," she [illegible] presently, "don't cry any more. I have the mandrake myself, and I will give it to you. It will be no loss to me, for I have every thing I want. I like meeting with difficulties, for I have power within myself to break them down. If you like to have the mandrake, I will give it to you."

"Like it!" cried Tibbie. "Is it would I like it, she says? Oh, wirra, wirra! isn't her ladyship gone mad? Like to have the mandhrake! Like to get my will! An' they said ye were hard-hearted. Then it's soft-hearted ye are, an' I was a fool to be talkin' to ye. Give away yer luck to wan like me! If I had it I'd see ye die afore I'd give it to ye."

"Oh, very well!" said Katherine, turning away. "Of course, if you don't want it, I can give it to some one else."

Tibbie uttered a cry. She fell on the ground, and laid hold of Katherine's gown.

"Ladyship, ladyship!" she said, "I meant no harm. It's on'y amazed I was,

an' I ax yer honor's pardon. Give me up the mandhrake, an' ye may put yer foot on me, an' walk on me. I'll do any thin' in the world for ye when I have a divil to do my will. Ladyship, ladyship, give me the mandhrake!"

"There, then," said Katherine, "I promise that you shall have it; and if ever I should want any thing of you I expect you to be friendly. Stay, there is one thing I should like, — to see the house of Tobereevil. Bring me there now, and you shall have the mandrake to-morrow. I don't want to see the miser, only his den."

"Well," said Tibbie, who had now got on her feet, and recovered her self-possession. "If you can creep, an' hould yer tongue, an' if yer shoes don't squeak, I'll take yer through the place. There's little worth seein' for a lady like yersel', but come wid me if you like it. On'y don't blame Tibbie if Simon finds ye out."

"Leave that to me," said Katherine: "I'm not afraid of Simon."

Tibbie clasped her hands, and rocked herself with delight. "That's the mandhrake," she muttered. "There's nobody can gainsay her wid the mandhrake undher her thumb; an' to-morrow it'll be Tibbie's."

So these new friends set to work to extricate themselves from the prison of trees in which they had taken pains to immure themselves. They groped, and pushed, and fought, until they made their way out into the more open woods, where air and moisture were found plentiful enough, and where the young vegetation was varied and magnificent, the delicate and wholesome growing mingled with the rank and poisonous. Ivy trailed from high branches of trees, making beautiful traps for unwary feet. Grass was long and coarse, being nourished with the giant ferns by creeping sources of the evil well of the legend. Streaks of fiery scarlet shining out here and there from the gloom of greenery, and blackish atmosphere of rotten thickets, announced the brazen beauty of the nightshade. Upon this Katherine pounced, making herself a deathly and brilliant nosegay as she went along; a poisonous sheaf of burning berries for a centre, some stalks of hemlock, some little brown half-rotted nut-leaves with blots of yellow and crimson, some black slender twigs, the whole surrounded by a lace-work of skeleton oak-leaves. She would have nothing fresh, nothing of the spring; her whim being to make a nosegay out of deadliness and decay.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FALSE LOVE.

SIMON was getting through the cold weather badly. He missed Tibbie, and he missed the fool. He had now to light his scrap of fire with his own trembling fingers, and to cook his morsels of food himself. He had no one to scold, no one on whom to vent in passion the anxiety of his mind, which feared that he must yet be robbed, and live to die a pauper. His soul, too, was racked by tortures of doubt as to his nephew's fitness for the trust which had been reposed in him. In the business of wringing money from the tenants he did not show that eagerness and ingenuity which Simon had hoped to find in him. He had proposed to grant a small piece of mountain land to a certain beggar woman, so that she might build herself a house, and live in it free of rent. There was an audacity in this proposal which had terrified the miser. How was he safe in the hands of a person who could conceive and give utterance to such an idea? He could only keep watch over the doings of this nephew and agent, exerting himself meanwhile to make amends, by personal economy, for any extravagance which the young man might perpetrate. He had now reduced the cost of his living very low, powder and shot being the chief items of his expenditure; and larks and thrushes, crows and sparrows, were the dainties which supplied the absence of more ordinary food. Since Tibbie's disappearance he had not enjoyed the luxury of bread. The birds of the air and the roots of the earth were more than enough to satisfy his appetite. He ate but once a day, and the fire was allowed to go out as soon as his dinner had been cooked. This was a new plan of saving, for formerly he had been used to have a fire, however small, at which to warm his frail body in the winter weather. So now he suffered sorely from the cold, though that was little to Simon while he felt that he did his duty. He missed the fool even more than Tibbie; for Con would not now be coaxed within his doors, but would nevertheless come hovering about the place, peering in at the keyholes, and flattening his white face against the window-panes. Simon was often unconsciously an object of close observation to the fool, who, with the strong fascination of hatred, would watch him unseen through some secret loophole; but if Simon chanced to espy him, this irregular visitor would at once vanish off into the woods.

Whilst Tibbie and Katherine were making their way into the house, Simon was sitting in state in his freezing den, expecting the arrival of the new agent upon business. His pistols were beside him on the table; for he never forgot that he was subject to a danger from the presence of his nephew. The fear of the fulfilment of the prophecy by Paul haunted him unceasingly, and made him wary in his dealings with this young man, whom he had admitted into his confidence. He never turned his back upon him for a moment, and never, during their interviews, moved from the table where the pistols lay near his hand. To-day he was sitting thus, provided against danger, when Paul made his appearance, — a good deal changed from the Paul of a few months ago, looking pale and thin, with restless eyes and a nervous and uneasy expression about the mouth. He looked as if the sun had not shone on him for a year. His dress, too, was more careless than it used to be; and he appeared altogether as if things were far from well with him. The change did not escape Simon's eye, and he was pleased with it. "The young man is taking a lesson from me," thought the miser; "he is growing more saving of his pocket, and more sparing of his enjoyments. I see that I have but to be patient with him, and he will yet turn out well."

Paul drew his chair to the opposite side of the table, and uncle and nephew set to work to do their business together. They made a striking contrast, though there was some likeness between them. Paul had his mother's fair skin and fair hair, and was so far unlike the race of the misers, who were of a swarthy complexion. He had a broader forehead than had been the share of any of his fathers; but he had the arched nose of the Finistons, and the dark flashing eye, deep-set under graceful brows. There was enough likeness between the old and the young man to make a looker-on tremble for what Paul might yet become.

Paul delivered over the money which he had collected for rent, but the sum fell short of the miser's expectations.

"So!" cried he in a passion, "I see that already you have allowed yourself to be imposed upon. They tell you they cannot pay. I ask them to look at me. Is there a man on the property who lives with rational temperance except myself? Let them find you the money, or you and I must quarrel. If you will not deal fairly with them, somebody else shall do it. Every man who will not pay must quit the place."

"You had better let them stay where they are," said Paul. "Good times may come, and they may be enabled to meet your demand. Turn them out of the country, and where are the wealthier tenants to fill their place? You will find empty cabins, and no money at all."

"That is your ignorance," said the miser; "but I am willing to teach you. There are shepherds, Scotchmen, who would take the whole mountain from me at a handsome rent. Now am I — a man practising self-denial in my own person — to make enormous sacrifice for the sake of pampered beggars who, I doubt not, will have their two meals in the day? My plan is to get rid gradually of the poorest amongst my tenants. People have no right to live in a country which is not able to support them. For the future I shall expect you to understand me in this matter. If the people will not pay you, you must send the people away."

"I have no liking for the work, sir. I don't see how I can obey you."

"Then, sir, I don't see how you can expect to be my heir. I am not bound to leave my little property to you. I have connections in England, wise, rich men, who look well to the increase of their store, and deserve a helping hand on that account. To them shall go every penny I am possessed of, if you set up your ideas in opposition to mine."

Paul flushed, and turned pale. The time had gone past when such a threat as this had no terrors for him. It was dreadful to him now, for the thirst for power had taken possession of his soul. It enraged him to think of those wise, rich men from England coming over here to plant, and to sow, and to build upon his land. He was convinced that he could rule the country better than they could do, and it might be well to save the many by the sacrifice of a few. Evil must be done in order that good might come of it. Paul swiftly argued thus in his own mind, — that clouded mind which was no longer what it had been.

He was conscious of a falling off in his own mental powers, in his capacity for thought and feeling. The consciousness tortured him; but he could not see where he had gone wrong, nor discern any means by which he could become better or wiser in the future. He could not even think the matter out; for his mind would not fasten on it, and all his moral perceptions were becoming hazy and dull. His memory was whimsical; certain ideas passed away from it, like the mist of breath from off a glass, whilst others enlarged themselves, became distorted, and were not to be

effaced. He forgot at this moment his former desire to be independent of the miser, his aspirations after honest industry, however meagre the reward. He thought no more of the plans which May had helped him to map out. He remembered only that he wanted Tobereevil, and also that if he quarrelled with the miser, certain rich men from England would step into the inheritance which he coveted. Upon this one point his mind fastened its strength, and the fierce desire for possession took firm hold of his brain. He promised Simon that he would see about the matter.

"See about it in time, then," said the miser, "for you have natural disqualifications for your office, and you will need to work hard in order to overcome them; but I will give you time, for we are a slow race in developing. As young men we are spendthrifts, and seem in danger of being ruined; but time improves us, and we grow wise as we grow old. So you may go away now, and think over this matter of the Scotch shepherds. Have a calculation made by the next time you come here, and let me know how soon we shall be ready for them."

Paul went away with slow steps and aching heart, knowing that he had bound himself to do work which his soul abhorred, and yet feeling himself utterly unable to struggle with the unholy force which had thus dragged him into bondage. Having thus, as he believed, sold himself to evil. He shrank from the eye of the heavens, and from the sad face of the land which lay so sadly waiting for its deliverance. He was seized with a passionate desire to gloat over the old walls, which contained somewhere that treasure which was to make him master of every thing that a man could covet in the world. As he went up the grand staircase the thought of May crossed his mind, a vision of her imploring face arose before his eyes; and, for a moment, the madness of supreme anguish made him dizzy. What would she say when she found that he had fallen so low? But the throe passed; and again he thought with delight of the miser's gold, then reflected with sudden wonder upon the condition of his own feelings, since this new joy of avarice had more power to keep its hold of him than had sorrow for the pain of his love. Was it possible that May had become less dear to him than she used to be? He groaned at this thought, and almost declared to himself in his passion that it must be so. If this were indeed the case, then must he rush on headlong to an evil end. Was this, indeed, a fate that was pursuing him? Must the love of May be thrust out of his heart by the power of that curse which was already beginning to work upon him? He leaned against the wall, and hid his face between his hands. He was not false, nor had he tired of her tenderness. She was still rare and holy and beautiful in his eyes; but he only seemed to understand this, not to feel it with his heart, into which had come the greed of gold. He seemed to see her at a distance, whither she had retired slowly and cruelly, and against his will. Longing would not bring her to him, despair could not break down the barrier which had erected itself between them. As he stood there, wrestling with an agony such as he had never suffered before, her saddened eyes seemed to shine out of a cloud which was beyond and above him. His woe became intolerable; and he tried to dash it from him, hurrying upward through the chambers of the mouldering mansion, and striving to revive within him all his old loathing of the race which had dwelt in it, and of their treasure which had made them what they were. These fierce efforts wasted him; and he looked thin and worn as he wandered, more tranquilly now, from room to room. A happier thought of his love came uppermost in his mind, and an unutterable longing for her presence took possession of him. If she were only here to receive the confession of his weakness! With this better thought in his mind, he looked up and saw Katherine.

The place of this meeting was on that high remote passage lined with goblin presses, where, not quite a year ago, the miser had essayed to make a bargain with the peddler. Paul had not seen it since that evening when he had suddenly sickened with fear, and had fled from the spot hoping to return never more. Now his wanderings had unexpectedly brought him here again. Katherine had been looking out of the little window from which he himself had gazed whilst the miser sorted his wares. The place was dim and ghostly; and she made a striking picture with her white-clad shoulders and gleaming head lit up by the only ray that found its way into the twilight.

She turned to him smiling with genuine delight.

"So you have come at last," she said; "but how did you know I was here?"

"I did not know that you were here," said Paul.

"Ah, well, you see, I drew you to the place. I knew that you were coming to Tobereevil to-day; and I thought I should

ask you to take me home through these dreadful woods."

"Certainly," said Paul: but he said it unwillingly; for he had some expectation that May would come to meet him, and at this moment he felt feverishly anxious to be near her. If he could but see her just now, the barrier of reserve might be broken down between them. Now he could confess, could ask for help: later his mood might change, so that the words he wished to speak would be no longer on his tongue.

"We had better go at once," said Paul. "May is coming to meet me."

Katherine laughed.

"You need not be uneasy about her; for she is making cakes, and she could not leave them. She would not risk the proper shade of brown upon the crust,—not for the sweetest conversation that heart ever held with heart."

"You wrong her," said Paul. "She can do much for those she loves."

"Who are they?" said Katherine. "May love any one! The fancy makes me smile."

"You forget that she loves me."

Katherine shrugged her shoulders.

"Does that idea really still bewitch your imagination? You think May loves you? It is so odd."

"I remember that you are a lady," said Paul; "but you try my patience too much."

"Do I?" said Katherine. "I admit that I am rather outspoken. I am not like her,—calm, cold, and proper. My patience is tried. I cannot quietly look on, and see one like you bound heart and soul for life to such an iceberg."

She was still leaning against the little window, with her head and shoulders framed by it. A stray gleam of sun had pierced the opening; illumined her golden head and scintillating eyes; put a carmine touch on her speaking lips, and a rosy curve of light round the rim of her peachy face. The white-furred shoulders stirred slightly, and the jewel at her throat quivered as if with feeling. Never was an unlovely soul more enchantingly disguised. Paul stood opposite, wrapped in the twilight, leaning against one of the goblin presses. His face was stern; but he started as a flashing look of homage was flung upon him, flattering him from head to foot. Katherine went on without waiting for him to recover from his surprise.

"Ah, you think she is not an iceberg. Men are so easily deceived! A few sweet words will keep you happy for a year,—that is, while you are suitors; but how will it be through life? A selfish mate, a cold heart,—freezing all the warm efforts of your own. One who can make cruel plans to fool you while you are her lover,—what will she be for sympathy after years have gone past?"

"What do you mean?" asked Paul; and his heart shook with terror of an evil far greater than any thing he had imagined.

"Oh, I have said too much! Surely I have forgotten myself. Whispered words between friends ought to be kept sacred, ought they not? I am sure you know that girls are apt to make confidences to each other; but I forgot that you have known so little about women." Katherine sighed. "I have already said too much. I will not be guilty of making mischief between you."

"You are rather late with that resolution," said Paul. "I am at a loss to know why you have spoken so at all."

Katherine turned away a little towards the embrasure of the window, and her head drooped on her hands.

"I have done wrong," she said; "and I cannot say any more. A woman must not betray herself. I did not mean to speak; only when one has a passionate interest at heart, prudence sometimes gets swept away upon the wave of too much feeling."

It came slowly into Paul's mind that her meaning was to drive May out of his heart, and thrust herself therein. He burned with surprise and shame, that a woman, and such a woman, should love him unsought. He pitied her, was grateful to her, admired and despised her, all in one moment. Then indignation took possession of him as he thought of May; and a superstitious dread of Katherine mingled itself with his anger. The spirit of maddening despondency which pursued him whispered to him now that this woman was a part of his evil destiny, that she would separate him from May, and thus help his ruin. When Katherine looked up to see the effect of her words, she saw a face, not full of tenderness, but of hatred and anger. Her blue eyes met his, and opened themselves scared. The sun shone more brightly through the little square of window, and made Katherine more beautiful every moment, intensifying its lustre in her frightened eyes, and shedding a more golden bloom on her cheek which had turned pale with real woe. For the second time in his life Paul found himself struggling with the frantic desire to harm a fellow-creature, and on the very same spot whence he had fled from the temptation so many months ago; but the fear in the woman's eye touched all that was manly in

his nature, and this passion left him suddenly, and he was shocked at himself.

"It is getting late," he said. "That bright gleam comes just before sunset. You must allow me to see you home at once."

Katherine bent her head with an expression of meek obedience, which was not all assumed. This wild Paul had got a power over her which no one had ever before possessed,—a power wielded unconsciously, and which she had never yet fully recognized until now. They went silently together downward through the mazes of the old mansion, he going first, opening doors, and turning to assist her over broken places in the staircase; she following silently and humbly in her pallid beauty, as if terrified and stricken at what had befallen her. She was stunned, having suddenly come face to face with her own defeat. She had thought to be mistress, and found that she was slave. A pain new to her, so sound in body, so unfeeling in spirit, had cloven her heart at sight of Paul's look of hatred. She was confounded with a new and strange knowledge of herself; so that her agony was genuine, even if rage made a part of it. Every time Paul turned to her, of necessity he pitied her; and his heart reproached him a little more and a little more. By the time they had got out into the open air his voice had got gentle when he addressed her. By and by she pleaded to be allowed to cling to his arm, for the fear that she had of these unnatural woods; and, this being conceded, the two passed on their way, and were lost in the thickness of the trees.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TRUE LOVE.

Now that they had so exacting an inmate as Miss Archbold at Monasterlea, it required all May's industry to keep things as they ever had been; to stop little gaps in the household arrangements made by the irregular demands of the visitor upon everybody's time. Katherine was pleased to leave her gowns about her room, upon the floor in heaps; her petticoats flung on the bed, her slippers in different corners, and the delicate silk hose tossed among her cambric pocket-handkerchiefs. Her cosmetics and hair-brushes, her pin-boxes and cream-pots, her essence-bottles and jewel-cases, and powder-puffs, together with the novel she had been reading, were found every morning in wild confusion upon her toilet-table.

Bridget was expected to reduce the place to order, and this was a work of time; for what with her awe, which made her hesitate, her curiosity, which led her to pry, and her admiration, which forced her to pause over every new object that she touched, the morning was pretty well filled with the discharge of her new duty. Nanny grumbled, and Miss Martha sighed — the time had gone past when the old lady could sing Miss Archbold's praises; but the burden fell on May.

To-day she got her work done early, for she had it in her mind that she would meet Paul coming home from Tobereevil. The day had brightened since Katherine's going forth, and there was a promise of spring in the air, if not its actual presence. A breath from April would wake all nature into life. The hedgerows were thick with buds, and alive with birds, who already scented the coming summer in the air. A lark soared in an ecstasy into clouds through which the sun was breaking its way. Tinges of soft green had crept out among the long purple and brown undulations of the moorland; and touches of pale yellow that would soon be green gilded the edges of reddish furrows in the recently ploughed fields. As May went along she could not see Paul; and when she came to the woods she shrank from plunging into them. They only, of all the landscape, kept a frown upon their faces; but it took a great deal of sun to make them bright. Near their outskirts lay pretty little sylvan groves, which seemed perpetually announcing with their smiles to the world that they had crept out from under the shadow of the curse, and that they had only a distant kinship with the trees of the dreadful woods. In one of these, which commanded a view of Simon's avenue, May took her seat upon a fallen tree. A stream flowed past her feet which but yesterday had been frozen, and which was rejoicing noisily in its freedom. Clumps of primroses had nestled themselves under the shelter of mossy stones at its edge, so that they could taste its delicate spray, and enjoy its genial company. Violets had decked out the splay roots of an old thorn, which had dragged itself from the earth by sheer weight of its mighty age. This stream, with its flower-borders and mosses its old thorn and fallen oak, was in a warm nook, where spring could not but choose to show herself early. It skirted a vast bog whose rugged brown outlines swept behind in sombre bleakness, and made a bit of beauty all the more gladsome because of ugliness close at hand.

The girl sat down on a fallen tree to watch for the first appearance of a human figure in the distance. The past three months had left their traces upon May. Her face was always pale now, except when a blush or a spring wind made it bloom for a passing moment. Her eyes had grown larger and darker, and had a look of hidden suffering. Pauses like this were very difficult to her; for she could not afford much brooding when in trouble, was not given to tears, and did not do what women call fretting. Grief dealt so hardly with her, that, for life's dear sake, she was driven into resistance.

This was not the romantic sorrow of the girl of a year ago, whose lover had gone away; but the quiet woe of a woman who had sworn to be faithful. Grief that is most unselfish is always hardest to bear. A selfish heart will comfort itself with the little merciful compensations which life is ever providing; but the heart that aches for another cannot even relish peace while evil has hold of the one beloved. May plucked violets for occupation, and made them up into nosegays, and wound them together in wreaths; one she would give to Paul for his button-hole, and she would wear another in her bosom; but she would not give any to Katherine. She and Paul should share at least a wreath of violets between them.

At this childish work her heart eased itself a little; till, looking up, she saw figures in the distance among the trees,—Paul and Katherine; but they were not coming quite her way. The flowers fell from her fingers; her hands dropped in her lap. She had told Paul in the morning that she would, if possible, meet him at this spot; but he had met Katherine instead, and she was leaning on his arm. It seemed to May that they were walking as lovers walk. She sighed a little; and then the blow descended on her heart, her senses went away, and she fell from her seat, and lay, forgetful of all trouble, among the primroses.

At the other side of the bank, and right behind the great thorn, an old woman was toiling down in a cutting of the ugly bog. She was the person known in the country as "Bid the Thraveller;" and she had been busy since daybreak cutting long sods of the black, reeking turf, and setting them upon their ends together in little stacks. By and by she would come back to them, and spread them out to get thoroughly dried; and against autumn she would have accumulated a store of firing to present to some kindly house-holder, at whose fireside she was used to sit. Her work done for the present, she washed her hands and feet in the brown bog-water, and put on her old cloak, which had been laid aside carefully, picked up her stick, and began to climb the bank, that she might rest in the grove a little before beginning her evening journey to seek a shelter for the night. Old women can love pretty places as well as young girls; and May's fallen tree was a favorite resting-place for Bid, who might often be found there on fine days, knitting busily in the solitude.

Bid felt a little uneasy as she climbed the bank; for, as she tied on her cloak, she had heard a sigh float past her ear across the loneliness and silence of the bog. It seemed as if the wind had bent the bog-blossoms; and they had whispered, "My heart is broken." No sound heard here need be surprising, where the air was full of spirits; but Bid did not quite like to be the *confidante* of creatures of whom she knew not the dwelling-place nor the nature. The very bending and bowing of the ranks and files of white fleecy blossoms that rocked thenselves towards her like living things in trouble made the old creature shiver, and almost believe that they had spoken. She crept up the bank, and crossed herself as she set foot in the little grove; but superstition fled like a bat at a blink of daylight when she saw a fellow-creature lying prone on the earth.

Bid knew the girl from the abbey. Not once, nor twice, but many scores of times, had she been warmed and fed by her in the kitchen at Monasterlea; and the old woman was afflicted at this piteous sight. She knew now whose heart was broken. Bid was shrewd and sympathetic: there was not a love-story in the country that she did not know of; and she had early scented trouble when things got amiss with Paul and his promised wife. She had called Katherine a witch before that young lady had been a week at Monasterlea; and, a few minutes since, she had descried this witch and May's lover coming out of the woods.

"Heart's blood of the hope of the country!" murmured the old woman, making a kind of mournful song as she chafed the girl's cold fingers. "Ye brought trouble on yer head when ye promised this bit o' a hand to a Finiston. Sure the devil that is tackled wid Paul has took a woman's shape this time! But ye'll rise out o' her, avourneen — ye'll rise out o' her yet!"

The words filtered through May's ears as she lay on the arm of the good Samaritan. She sat up, and wondered how her secret had been found out.

"Deary, don't mind an ould woman!" said Bid. "Sure I love Paul Finiston mysel', an' I have swore, on my knees, that the divil'll never get him. I niver put up a prayer that wasn't answered in the end; an' harm shall not get Paul while his friends has tongues to pray!"

May sat on a stone opposite Bid, who exhorted her thus, with finger uplifted, and a sybil-like look on her weather-beaten face.

"The curse is against me," said May despondingly. "It is creeping closer round him, and I am too weak to save him from it."

Bid looked frightened. "You won't give him up, avourneen?" she asked.

"Give him up!" said May; and she rose to her feet, glowing with sudden energy. "No, I will not."

"God love you, my jewel!" said Bid, "for you're fit to have the hope of the country in yer hands. Of course ye'll manage him well, for the quality does know how to deal wid one another; but I'm thinkin' it's mostly the same wid high an' low, an' I wanst lost a lover wid floutin' an' poutin' at him. He got tired o' a cross face, an' went off to seek a pleasanter wan; so you just despise yon flauntin' hussy, an' smile at Paul Finiston till ye smile the divil out o' him!"

"You are a kind friend," said May; and she began to think of how strange it was that she should thus give her confidence to a beggar-woman; but she put down her pride with a true instinct. "Ask the people to pray," she said; "for you are right in saying that this is the affair of the country."

"Ay!" said Bid, "it is the affair of the whole counthry; for, if Paul Finiston gets into evil hands, there'll be another miser o' Tobereevil, an' a star the less in heaven. An' do you keep up yer heart an' smile; for they say the divil does fly away before the smile o' patience."

May went home with the beggar's lesson in her heart; and, coming through the kitchen-garden, she met Katherine tripping along, carrying a large carrot by its green top, which was soiled with clay, having just left the ground. The guest was singing loudly, as if in the highest spirits. She seldom sang except when unable to control the outpouring of her triumph over some one; and she liked to please, except when she could have her will without the trouble of doing so. Her voice was shrill; and as she sang, coming down the kitchen-garden, there was a cruel harshness in her song, which might have made the birds shiver. It was dusk; but the girls could see one another as they met between the ranks of the cabbages, and May wondered greatly at Katherine's fancy for vegetables. The latter stopped her song upon a high, sudden note, while she picked the clay in pieces from her carrot.

"Perhaps you are looking for Paul," she said, with a careless air of superior knowledge. "He is gone home to his farmhouse. He will not be here to-night."

"I dare say he is busy," said May.

Katherine shrugged her shoulders, and smiled. "I don't think he has much business in his head," she said. "I believe he is not in the humor for our company. He is not happy in his mind. Why don't you make him happy?"

"He has a good deal of care," said May, not noticing the insolence of Katherine's tone. "He will be happier by and by."

"Perhaps he will," said Katherine, and turned her back on May, and went towards the house.

In Paul's absence, conversation was apt to flag of an evening between the ladies at Monasterlea. Since experience had revealed Katherine's character to Miss Martha, the young lady took no longer any trouble to amuse her hostess, who treated her, nevertheless, with all politeness and attention; for hospitality is a tyrant, and the unwelcome guest must be treated like the guest who is most desired.

Katherine knew this, and made herself comfortable accordingly. On this evening, while May sewed and Miss Martha knitted, she yawned over the pages of a novel. Her entertainers were not sorry when she bade them good-night, and yawned herself away to her own chamber.

When she had gone, May turned with her sewing to the fire; for she could not bear Miss Martha's eyes. She had known for a long time that her aunt wanted to speak to her; and she felt that she could not endure the things that the old lady would surely say; but now she plied her needle wildly, knowing that the moment had come when she must listen to a lecture with patience; that a conversation was going to take place which it would be very hard for her to forget.

Miss Martha was evidently making a great struggle to begin. Her knitting-needles flew faster, and pecked at each other wickedly, never heeding dropped stitches. Her mouth twitched; and her chin went up in the air, and came down again.

"May," she said, "is it possible that you have got nothing to say to me, now when we are alone, and not likely to be interrupted?"

"I, aunty?"

"Yes you. Who else? Is it possible that you have nothing to complain of?"

"Complain! Why should I complain?"

"We shall not get on very far if you echo every word I speak," said Miss Martha testily. "You may as well be frank with me, — not look on me as an enemy. I am old and fidgety, but I am not at all sure that you have another friend in the world."

May's lips moved, but no sound came. She tried again, and said, "Only one besides, aunty."

Miss Martha's irritation was soothed away. She drew her chair a little nearer, stretched out her soft wrinkled hand, and laid it on May's shoulder. "Are you sure that you have that one, May? Come, trust the poor old woman! Inward grieving will rot the soundest heart."

May's lips quivered; but her mouth soon steadied itself, and her eyes kept dry and bright.

"Now turn round to me, for I want to see your face. If you have got nothing to tell me, then I must speak out to you: I wish, in the name of Heaven! that you had never set your eyes on Paul Finiston."

"You must not say that."

"Yes, I will say it; for I fear he will break your heart. I will say, also, that I thought you had more spirit. If I were in your place, I would bid good-by to him at once, and let him go about his business."

"I can't do it, aunty; and, if I could, I dare not."

"Dare not!"

"Oh! do you forget? Paul is not like another man. It is the shadow that he has always dreaded that has come over him, that is all."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" said Miss Martha; "that old nonsense! I tell you, I won't listen to it: it is a sin against Heaven. I thought you had more sense than to get smitten with his madness."

"It may be madness," said May; "but madness is a misfortune, not a crime. Something has gone wrong with him. I will not make it worse by leaving him when he most wants a friend."

Miss Martha winced. Simon's words, "You who deserted me in my need," came across her ears, as they had many a time done since the day they were spoken; but May's doctrine was not acceptable to Miss Martha's faith. It must lie in people's own will, whether to be bad or good.

"Fiddle-de-dee!" said Miss Martha again. "People walk into crooked ways with their eyes open, and then they rail at fate for not putting their feet into straight ones."

"I don't think Paul is deliberately walking in crooked ways," said May; "and unless he himself throws me off I will hold to him even at the cost of being thought to have no spirit. I know him better than you do, and I believe there are stranger things in the world than you think off."

"You think he is bewitched, so that he doesn't know what he is doing," said Miss Martha, in amazement.

"I cannot say what I think. He is under some influence which seems to have changed his whole nature. If he be quite delivered up to it, the change will be completed, and he will become" — May shuddered and paused.

"You have grown as superstitious as himself," said Aunt Martha. "I really give you up. All I can say is, I wonder you can sit by neglected, and see him prefer another woman."

May turned pale, and her hands knotted themselves together in a knot of pain. "I cannot say that I have seen that yet, aunty."

There was something of agony in the young girl's voice, that smote upon Miss Martha's heart, and made her regret her impatient speeches.

"Perhaps you are right, love," she said, after a pause. "I am a peppery old woman; but your happiness is the one object of my life."

"I know it, dear aunty; but listen, and I will tell you about my happiness. It is staked on one person; his welfare is my welfare, his affliction is my affliction: I have no business in the world, except to be true to Paul Finiston. His cares, and even his wrong-going, must all be upon my shoulders. I believe it would be a great misfortune to him if he were to love Katherine Archbold; therefore, I will do all in my power to prevent such a thing happening. If I saw her truer, more loving, more likely to make him good and happy than myself, I think — I think I could give him up to her; but I do not believe he likes her, and there are other things which I dread for him more than her influence. He is not in a condition at present to meet his enemies: I must fight his battles for him, until good times come; so don't be disgusted if I have got no proper pride, but try to have patience with me, and with him for my sake."

So spoke May, with a brave air: but later, when quite alone, she walked about the room, weeping silently. The cottage was quiet; but the wind moaned loudly round the cloisters, and the owls had begun to hoot in the old belfry. Her thought

travelled through the dark night, along the moorland path to the highest window in the gable of the farmhouse. There was Paul sitting alone, and overwhelmed with strange troubles, as far removed from her as if the sea had rolled between them. Here was an hour in which Katherine could not divide them, and yet that hour was as useless to her as if it had no place in time. She longed to be a cat or a dog, that she might sit beside his foot, and look in his face, or a bird that she might peck at his window and gain admittance. Was he reckoning the miser's hoards, or thinking of Katherine? It seemed long, long since he and May had made their simple plans at this fireside, counting the world a paradise, and all danger of harm and trouble at an end. Now the night wind assured her that these days would come no more.

Faster and faster her tears came down. She despaired when she found herself weeping, thinking her courage quite gone, and flung herself against the arm-chair in the chimney-corner, burying her face in its leathern lap. The old clock ticked in the hall by the stone angel, and its voice came into the room and grew hoarse with sympathy: the lamp burned low, and the fire glowed in red ashes; and May was tempted for once to think of her aunt's vehement wish, and to doubt whether it would not have been better for her if she had never seen Paul. She might have had placid years in this home, safe from the world; have made soups for the sick, and knitted her life into warm petticoats and socks for the poor; have heard the winter howl past her in fearless content, and picked the flowers of the summers, and so travelled without a pang to her grave. Now the turmoil of despair was in her heart, and a prospect lay before her of endless uneasiness and pain. The tranquil little home could not comfort her with its shelter; the household gods looked down and could not soothe: but it was only for one moment that this cruel doubt was harbored.

"It is well that I have known him," she said; "for I will save him if it cost me my life. When he is old, and the battle won, he will be glad to think that I lived."

She dried her tears, and thought upon Paul's case, acknowledging that the thing she dreaded most for him was the utter loss of his mind; that the curse and its fascinations, or his horror of the same, would in the end drive him to madness. What if after all it had been only a latent insanity that had wrought through generations of the race of Finiston, making them creatures unhappy and solitary, and shunned by the rest of mankind? If so, then had Paul better fly from this place with its associations, and seek safety in another part of the world. She would send him across the seas, and never look upon his face again, if thus she could secure his perfect welfare.

Katherine at the same moment was also awake and alive, though she had retired to her room so early. The tall wax candles on her chimney stood in candlesticks adorned with crosses and reverend figures, and which had been taken from the chapel, having been used on the monk's altar. Her wood-fire crackled merrily, her arm-chair was drawn up beside it, and she was dressed in a long red-flannel dressing-gown, with her hair unbound on her shoulders.

As Katherine sat so she amused herself with a quaint amusement. She held the carrot in her hand which had excited May's wonder in the kitchen-garden; and she had washed it and cut away its delicate green plumes, and was carving it with a penknife into the likeness of a little man.

She was making a mandrake in order to keep her word to Tibbie; and she held it aloof, and laughed at it as her work progressed. She had never seen a mandrake, but then neither had Tibbie; and, in pleasing the old woman, she would follow her own fancy. She was by no means an artist, but contrived to throw a knowing look into the eyes of the little figure, making it as ugly as it was possible that one could make it. She pared, and picked, and notched till its aspect had become sinister enough to content the most superstitious hag in the world. When all was done she stained it a darker hue, so that the carrot might not appear.

But what did Miss Archbold want with Tibbie that she should thus humor her whims? Katherine did not ask herself the question while she carved her ugly manikin. A spirit such as Tibbie's deserved encouragement, that was all; and one who lived so near the miser could not but be interesting to the future bride of his nephew. Katherine wondered, as she worked, how long the old man could live. How if his seventy years should multiply until they counted a hundred? Katherine sat up long that night, with brows bent, over the fire. She was beginning to feel care, — she who had never met any obstacle to her wishes which had not been easily overcome. The owls hooted in the belfry, and the winds moaned round the cloisters; and even May was fast asleep before Katherine left her chair.

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CHAPTER XXXII.

BID'S CASTLE.

When May awoke next morning, she found that she had been dreaming that Bid had spoken to her of a thing, which, in reality, the old woman had forborne to mention. Said Bid, "Paul Finiston promised me a corner of land, and that he would build me a little hut upon it. It gladdened my old heart to think that I should have a house I could call my own; but I find that he has forgotten me."

When May awoke she remembered that Paul had made this promise to Bid, and had failed to keep it. She turned the case over in her mind while she was dressing, and out of her solicitude in the matter there sprang a bright suggestion as to her difficulties. She put on a spring-like dress made by her own fingers, hoping that Paul would approve it, of little blue and white stripes upon gracefully flowing cambric, and confined by a pretty ribbon at the waist; wound a scarf about her shoulders, and went up the road to look for Paul, having some idea that he would come for breakfast after his absence the night before. As she walked along the path by the river, she found that, early as she was, Katherine had been out before her. Here were Paul and Katherine coming over the stile.

But May's new-born hope was strong enough to stand even this blow. Katherine was surprised to see her come onward towards the stile with an open smile and no trace of anger. She had thought to see her turn and go home, alone, offended, and in distress.

"Good-morning," said May brightly: "the spring is all alive in the air."

"We have not been thinking of the weather," said Katherine, shrugging her shoulders.

"I had not noticed it before," said Paul, looking about him with a dull air.

Katherine cast an insolent glance at May; but May took no notice of her, only slipped round to Paul's other side, and began chattering merrily to him, of the rabbit that had run across her feet, and the fishes that she had seen leaping in the river, and presently she broke out into chirruping and carolling in musical mimicry of a lark in the clouds. Paul's dulness melted away. He listened to her with delight; and new life came into her veins when she found that she still possessed the power to give him pleasure.

She followed up her advantage; and after breakfast, when Katherine had gone to her room to put on her out-door dress, in order to be ready to accompany Paul when he should go out, May stole her arm through his, and scampered off with him, making him run with her along the paths, and never stopping till she sank panting and laughing at his feet, safely hidden under the shelter of a great haystack.

Luckily Paul's little flicker of good spirits had not expired. He smiled when she laughed, and asked what she meant by leading him such a dance: but the race had done him good; for there was light in his eyes, and the old natural tone in his voice.

"Oh!" said May, "I have been so longing for a race. I feel the spring in my veins, and I am ready for any mischief. How I wish we could climb the mountain together — only you and I."

"Let us go at once!" said Paul.

"Ah! but I mean to take a whole day to it. I have got a little plan, if you will only like it. You remember Bid the Traveller?"

Paul's brow contracted with nervous pain. "I promised her a cabin," he said; "but Simon" —

"Never mind Simon: we won't ask his leave. It can't be any harm to take a loan of a mountain rock. We'll go up as high as the Kearney's, and build the old woman a hut. Simon need never hear of it,— he'll never get so far; and, if this is bad morality, I'll take the sin on my shoulders."

"The plan is good," said Paul, "if we can only carry it out."

"Oh, it will be easily done! I'll make all the arrangements, and we'll build the hut with our own hands. The only trouble will be to get away from Miss Archbold."

Again Paul's face clouded.

"But I will be rude to my guest for once," said May. "I have made up my mind to that. She shall not know where we have been until we are home again."

"Do not breathe it in the house, then," said Paul, "or she will be right upon our track. We shall have a good time together,— a thing we have not enjoyed for many a day."

Thus it was settled, and May entered vigorously into preparations for her stolen day in the hills. Even Miss Martha was not told of it until after Katherine had gone to her chamber on the night before the event; and, at four o'clock on a starry morning May, with Bid and Mrs. Kearney's lads, met Paul who was waiting for them at the foot of the mountain. Wit-

much laughing and merry jokes, the party began the ascent by the light of torches made of lighted cones of straw which the gossoons carried in their hands, and flourished above their heads as they danced on before the rest, showing the way. Presently Con the fool started out of a bush; and he, too, must have a torch, with which he played strange pranks for the amusement of the rest, firing the wild whins and thorns as he went along, so that a crackling line of flame flared out and flew after him, then writhed away in sparks into darkness. May and Paul followed, and laughed as they trod the sparks under their feet. They were once more a pair of children, as they had been in the old time before Paul put his hand to the miser's work, or Katherine came to vex them. They forgot the curse, and all else that had troubled them.

By the time they reached the Kearneys' house the day had begun to break; and, during a pale, chill half-hour, our curious little party were glad to gather into the cabin to bask in the warmth of the fire before beginning the operations of the day. Then Nan and her mother led the way to where the building materials had been collected during the past few days: goodly blocks of bogwood, stones of a handy size, a mess of excellent mortar made of mud and other ingredients, after a famous mountain receipt; heaps of clay, bundles of rough and knotty twigs; sheaves of rushes and rods; and a store of straw for the thatching. A council was held as to the site on which Bid's castle was to be built; and finally a spot was chosen which was dry and sheltered because of a rock which stood behind it, very fit to keep off the storm, yet not high enough to intercept the sun. Bid and the house-mother, Nan and Con, Paul and the gossoons, stood by and watched while May laid the first stone of the little edifice; the sun suddenly rising to witness the ceremony, the mountains blushing, and the smoke of the Kearneys' cabin turning wonderfully into flame.

Then the work began, every one present lending a hand. Bid and the house-mother bundled the blocks to the builders' feet, May brought the mortar, Nan carried the clay, while Paul and Con and the gossoons laid stone over stone and piled log above log. By nine o'clock the walls had grown wonderfully; and the builders retreated again to Mrs. Kearney's cabin, where the kettle was found boiling, and a hamper had been unpacked. Tea, white bread, and roasted ham for the builders: never was a merrier breakfast. Then the work went on again; and by noon the walls had risen to their full height, which was just two feet higher than Bid's silvered head.

Paul and May left the work for an hour's rest, and wandered away to explore the heathery world. Paul was in happy mood. With May's hand in his own, and the mountain air blowing on him, he was comfortable and at peace, and tasted the rarest enjoyment. With a strange lapse of memory, which was habitual to him now, he forgot the engagement which he had made with the miser, and talked to May of their future home, and of his mission among the people. May seemed to walk on air, and laughed out loud that she might not weep for joy. They came on a tiny stream, so hidden in the moss that it seemed going on a secret errand to the lower world; and they tracked it for a mile, and hunted it from its ambush, till it fled from their pursuit down a chink in the steep rock. An eagle wheeled over their heads, and they watched with breathless interest while it dropped to the valley for its prey. They counted the different kinds of flowers, the homes within range of their eyes, and the sails on the distant sea. Such interests were enough for the moment, and they wished no deeper subjects for conversation. They understood each other so well that they had scarcely need of words.

The new house was a tiny dwelling, but a castle to homeless Bid. A smooth flag was laid for a hearthstone, and a fire kindled at once to dry the floor of clay. The gossoons, at their leisure, would daub tar on the unseasoned rafters, and dash the inner walls with sand; and, when it was known throughout the country that the "thraveller" had got a home, there was many a little necessary for housekeeping that would come offering itself to Bid. A "creepie stool" would be the gift of one friend, a bit of delft that of another; a third would spare a skillet, and a fourth bestow a kettle. May promised a bed of the best goose feathers, a teapot, and a dresser, with some pretty cups and plates. Paul gave money, to be expended at the next fair held in the little shiny white town which could be seen from Bid's new doorway. There she could find whatever other luxuries the magnificence of her new housekeeping might require, as well as a basket of simple wares which she might sell for her future livelihood about the country. "There are worse trades than a peddler's," said Paul. "You know I have tried it myself;" which made the little group of builders burst out laughing through their tears.

The sun had set when May and Paul set

out to walk homeward down the mountain. Before they left, Bid knelt down on her floor, and pronounced a blessing on their heads which turned the listeners pale with awe; and, after they were gone, she shut her door to be alone under her own roof a while with her gratitude and her God. When Nan, after a while, came tapping to her door, the girl was half afraid to go in; but Bid's passion had spent itself, and she was now ready and willing to be bidden to a feast. May had bequeathed to the housemother the remaining contents of the hamper, and there was a merry supper-party at Mrs. Kearney's.

In the mean time, May and Paul went their way down the road homeward, with the beggar's prayer following them, tracking their feet like a trail of light as they threaded the sombre shades of the Wicked Woods.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

TIBBIE FINDS A "DEVIL TO DO HER WILL."

When Tibbie parted from Katherine in the mansion of Tobereevil, the old creature did not hastily retreat from the shelter of its roof. She was too much interested in the golden-haired lady who had promised her a mandrake to lose sight of her for a moment, so long as she was within reach; and so followed her stealthily from room to room, peering at her through key-holes and cracks in crazy doors. When Paul came upon Katherine, up in the lobby of the goblin presses, Tibbie espied him from a room at the lower end of the passage, and was witness of all that passed between the two young people. She was keen enough to discern that Katherine had a mind to be mistress of Tobereevil in spite of her contempt for and enmity towards the heir; also that Paul "didn't cotton to her, for all her grandeur and her beauty."

Why this should be, Tibbie could not guess. The poor and the ugly might be slighted and disliked; but wherefore the rich and lovely? Tibbie was bewildered. Another cause of amazement to her was that Katherine, thus in want of luck herself, should choose to be so foolish as to give away her mandrake; and she did not doubt that things had gone wrong with her since she first thought of parting with it. However this might be, these reflections made Tibbie a hundred times more anxious to get possessson of the luck-spirit. Katherin might repent, and keep it to herself; an if, after all, the young lady were to be ge rous and keep her word? Tibbie felt gratitude at the thought of so great a sac fice made in her favor: she began to desp Katherine.

When Tibbie had done her eaves-dro ping, she made her way carefully do stairs to her old haunts about the cellar a the kitchen. To tell the truth, she ha never ceased, for long, to be an inmate the mansion. For a few nights after dismissal she had sought shelter from t country people, who had given it out charity, yet with but a shrinking sort goodwill; and Tibbie knew that she no favorite, and her vagrant life was i some to her: so, after a little time, came wandering back to the mansion, at last boldly took up her quarters in old place. She knew holes in the cell where she could hide, if Simon took a fa to come pattering down the stone stairc to make an inspection of his lower premi This happened but seldom, and at ot times Tibbie was free to do as she pleas Her domestic arrangements were made up so extremely scant a scale that all trace them could be hidden at a moment's notic and, in the mean time, she kept herself al by pilfering from the nearest farms.

Tibbie was now out every day, watchin to see Katherine bringing her the mandrake When no Katherine appeared she was muc disturbed. The young lady had then re pented, and was going to play her false Tibbie reflected, and thought she would lik to punish her; and, in the midst of thes broodings, a bright idea came into her cu ning mind.

"I will buy the mandhrake from her wi a charm!" thought Tibbie, "an' I wi work my will through her, in a way she littl guesses."

So she went searching and grubbin among her bundles of rags which we stuffed in holes in the cellars; and she pr duced a package of dried herbs, whic looked, some like dust, and some like ashe After midnight, when Simon had finished h nightly excursions about the rooms, and w safe in bed, Tibbie kindled a fire, and plac a broken saucepan upon the blaze. In this she shed two or three different kinds powders from her store, mixing them car fully. She hung over this saucepan for ma hours of the night; and Con sat on t hearth, feeding the fire with the wicked fa ots out of the woods, with his legs crosse and an expression of doubt and disconte upon his flat white face. As the momen

passed, he often glanced fearfully over his shoulder fancying Simon was on the staircase; and once he sprang up with a shriek, dropping the fagots on the hearth, and flew into a cellar, where he lay quaking for half an hour. Con's terror of the miser was on the increase; and, though he had crept in here from habit when he had found Tibbie on the spot, yet he seemed to know by instinct that she had now lost her power, and that she, too, was afraid of Simon. Tibbie did not much mind him, except to give him a push with her foot when she found him in her way; but, when he came shivering out of the cellar, she gave him a shaking which taught him to be quiet during the rest of this vigil. No two people could be more different than Con at Tobereevil and Con up in the mountain. In the Kearneys' cabin the fool was light, active, and as frolicsome and merry as a squirrel, ready to help everybody, and grinning with contentment. Down here he was dull and timid, and sometimes dangerous; but Tibbie did not heed him. He might growl if he pleased, and snarl, too, if he had a mind: she was not one to be particular about manners.

When Tibbie's brewing was finished, she strained the stuff carefully, and put it in a clear glass bottle. It was a pale, straw-colored fluid, and looked very innocent; but Tibbie did not count it so.

"Love-charms!" muttered she, as she hid it in one of her secret holes: "there's no sich thing in the world. I tried them all round when I was a girl, and nobody would care about me; but let her give this to Paul Finiston, an' it'll make him as mad an' silly as the omadhaun Con himsel'; an' then let the world judge betune them which is the fittest to be masther o' Tobereevil."

When Katherine came from her room on the morning on which Bid's castle was getting built, Miss Martha broke the truth to her as gently as might be, telling her that May and Paul had gone on business up to the mountain. Katherine recognized the trick that had been played on her, and her face took a strange expression. After breakfast there being nothing better to do, she thought she could pass the time by going in search of Tibbie, so took her way to the woods, guessing she should meet the hag in their neighborhood; and in this she was not wrong, for Tibbie was watching of her.

The meeting between the two was not so lively as it might have been; for Katherine was in bad humor, and Tibbie full of suspicions. Tibbie's mood was changed, however, when she saw her mandrake emerge from many mysterious wrappings, and held it safely in her hands. She howled over it for joy, and kissed it with her withered lips. In her excitement she almost forgot her contempt for Katherine, who had been so silly as to give this treasure out of her keeping, and was ready to lay her gray hairs under the wonderful lady's feet.

"Try and keep steady, my good woman," said Katherine. "If you make so much noise about this you will be robbed. I advise you now to go back to Tobereevil, and take up your old duties without asking the miser's leave. You need not be afraid of him now that you have got your mandrake."

"No," chuckled Tibbie, "I need not be afraid of him; an' if there's any thin' that Tibbie can do for your ladyship, — mind, she'll do it, an' welcome!"

Katherine looked at her, then gazed away darkly into the depths of the woods.

"I don't want any thing of you," she said; "but, if ever I should, remember what you have said. I shall return soon to Camlough; and it may be a long time before I set eyes on you again."

Tibbie had now secured and secreted her new possession, and all her contempt returned for the creature who had been so foolish as to part with her luck. She fumbled among her rags, and produced the straw-colored bottle.

"Pardon, ladyship! but you said you were goin' to Camlough. Might I be bould enough to ax you if ye would leave this small message wid a young girl that lives on the roadside?"

"What is it?" said Katherine.

"Oh! thin it's you that'll laugh at it; for ye'll nivir want it," said Tibbie. "Sure, it's on'y a little charm, sich as simple bodies does use."

"A charm!" said Katherine contemptuously.

"Ay, a love-charm. The girl was goin' to be married, an' her sweetheart he turned agin her; but the charm will bring the love o' her back to his heart. If wan body gives this to drink till another body, she'll be the dear light o' his eyes for the remainder o' his life. He'll think her beautiful an' lovesome, an' won't be able to live out o' her sight. He'll forget them he cared for; an' the wan that give him to dhrink o' this — she may hould his heart, an' his han' an' his money, an' his lan's till the day o' his death!"

"What ridiculous stories you are telling!" said Katherine angrily; and her eyes flashed from the bottle to the old woman's face, and from the face back to the bottle. "What could there be in a draught to work such a miracle?"

"Ah, ay! What could there be in a draught? Many a woman has axed that, an' yet the charm pushes it away. You keep yer eye on Sally, an' see if she's not married to her sweetheart in a month; but I humbly beg yer pardon for mentionin' sich foolishness. It's just like my impidence axin' a lady to do my business. I'll get some one goin' the roads that'll pass the bottle to Sal."

"Give it to me," said Katherine. "If the girl is to be made a fool of, I suppose I can do it; and now I will bid you good-morning, and wish you good luck with your mandrake."

Tibbie's eyes twinkled as she surrendered the precious bottle; and, in the midst of her profuse thanks, Katherine turned abruptly, and left her talking to the trees.

May and Paul were as well wearied as two people could wish to be when they came down the road that evening, and espied the lights shining in the windows of Monasterlea. Aunt Martha was glad to have them back again; for she had felt seriously in awe of Miss Archbold's darkened countenance. She had provided dinner with more than her usual care, and rejoiced at May's blooming cheeks and Paul's brightened manner, as the two sat down to table and related their adventures. Katherine was the most silent of the company; but, when Paul rose to go away, she spoke, —

"Stay a moment," she said, "till I make a request. I am going home to Camlough to-morrow. May I rely upon you to escort me, as I cannot go alone?"

"Going home!" echoed Miss Martha and May in a breath; and they both felt as if a weight had been rolled away from their hearts.

"Yes," said Katherine. "I shall ride, and send a carriage for my things."

"Had you not better send to Camlough, and ask your parents to come and fetch you?" asked Miss Martha.

"No." said Katherine bluntly. "I shall ride; and I shall ride alone if Mr. Finiston will not accompany me."

"That is out of the question," said Paul, now forced to speak. "If you insist upon going, of course I shall be your escort."

Katherine bowed slightly, and then turned to Miss Martha.

"You do not press me to stay," she said.

"No," said the old lady, "that would not be right. Inhospitable as it may sound, I think it quite time that you were at Camlough with your mother."

Katherine smiled faintly.

"Thank you," she said. "That is an honest speech at any rate. I thank you fo all your hospitality; and you," she said t May, "I thank you also. I don't doub that I shall yet find means to repay yo what I owe you. I must say good-night, a I mean to be up so early."

Then she left the room.

"This is a nice piece of business," re marked Miss Martha, as soon as she wa gone. "I must say, Paul, I wish you wer not going with her."

"Why should he not go?" cried May with glowing cheeks.

"I shall leave her at the door, and com straight back again," said Paul. "It is th last thing I could wish, — to be her gues even for a night."

"You cannot come straight back: th journey is too long and fatiguing," sai Miss Martha; "but you can stay one night and return the next day. May and I wil not be jealous for that time."

"Jealous!" said May. "Dear aunty what an ugly word! He shall stay two three, four days, — a whole month if h likes!" and she put her hand on Paul' shoulder with a happy look of trust.

"See how little she values me!" sai Paul, smiling back his thanks into her shin ing face. And then she went out with hin to the door, perhaps to see if the stars wer still in the sky; and Miss Martha remainc in the parlor, rejoicing very greatly as sh put up her knitting for the night.

Paul and Katherine set out early th next morning, and May and Miss Marth watched them as they rode away in the sun shine.

"Only till to-morrow evening, and the the good old times will have come back,' May said to herself as she nailed up loos rose-branches in her garden, and counte the little buds which were already getting red. The day was beautiful, and as ful of hopefulness as herself. The ruins smile darkly out of all the hollow sockets of thei windows, and the cloisters gathered up thei gloom, and hid it under the ivy. Som swallows had arrived during the night, an were making a great fuss about taking pos session of their old homes in the chimney and about the eaves. There was a grea whirring and fluttering of wings every where; and, though the new-comers had no got leisure to sit down and sing, yet the ai was all filled with their melodious conversation. The birds were everywhere: long trains of rooks from Tobereevil sailing across the blue valley of the sky, whole coveys of yellow-hammers dropping like showers of gold upon the pillars of the old gate, while a goldfinch sat on May's window-

sill, and sang into the chamber. Indoors, Bridget was hanging up draperies about the windows; and May decked the sills with boxes full of blossoms, — the gayest and sweetest that the year had yet produced. All this long day she spent upon the flowers, working till past sunset, till the crescent crept up, and sat upon the hills, and a multitude of stars came out to inspect her labors. Next day she gave her energies to the interior of the cottage. Many little household matters were taken up and shaken out, and looked all the fresher and prettier for having been disturbed by skilful hands. Pictures were re-hung, and old furniture brightened up. So passed the interval which May had got to spend before Paul could return to her, until, at last, the evening arrived. Dinner was waiting, and May sat on the doorstep watching the road. The sun went down, but Paul had not appeared. Miss Martha began to get fidgety; but May said, —

"Wait a little, aunty! It is such a long, weary road."

The old lady went back to the parlor. The place was very quiet, the air sweet and still. Oh, for the ring of a horse's hoof on the road! Never was there a watcher more quiet yet more impatient than this one on the doorstep.

Miss Martha came out again.

"It is getting quite dark" she said, "and we really must dine. We can have something nice for supper, and he will enjoy it much more than if he finds he has kept us starving."

May agreed to this, and the evening lamps were lit. Dinner was served, and sent away.

Miss Martha dozed, and the cat played with her knitting-ball. The tea-tray came and went — nine o'clock, ten o'clock. May walked up and down the garden paths, and Miss Martha warned her that she had better stay indoors.

"You will only catch cold," she said, "and be laid up to-morrow when he comes. I must say I never saw you so very impatient before."

"No," said May penitently; but she could not rest. Eleven o'clock passed, and then the cottage was all shut up. When May awoke next morning the birds were all singing as if something good must happen. She dressed herself in great haste, and hurried out on the road. She climbed the old observatory in the belfry; but there was no sign of a horseman for miles along the road from the Golden Mountain.

She went about doing nothing all day. Her hands shook so, that they did mischief to every thing they touched; so she gave up occupation, and went about idly. When she spoke, her voice was irritable, and a flush burned on her cheek. Aunt Martha scolded her, as she always did before offering her comfort.

"I must say, May, I did not think you could be so exacting. Why should he not stay at Camlough for a few days, if he pleased? I am quite sure Sir John counts it a godsend to get hold of him; and he never was there before, and he will have a great deal to see."

"He ought not to stay there just now," said May; and her voice had got quite sharp.

Miss Martha said no more, and another night went past. On the next day May's irritability had disappeared, every other feeling being swallowed up in amazement. She appeared quite stunned for the next two or three days; and it seemed a matter of course that the night and morning should come and go, and that Paul should not appear. She became suddenly very busy, and it might have been supposed that she had forgotten him. She developed an extraordinary taste for cooking; and cakes, jellies, preserves, and potted meats were ranged on the pantry shelves in unnecessary profusion before she began to perceive that she was going too fast.

"Aunt Martha," she said one morning, "we are badly in want of sugar."

"So we may be, considering the rate you are going at. I don't think I am growing stingy; but, my dear, you must not ruin me!"

May looked astonished, and then ashamed. She peeped into the store-room, and did not go back to it again for a fortnight. Her conscience twinged her when all the dainties came to the table. The cooking had lasted a week, and then another fit came on.

May would sew, and sew as if her life depended on stitches. Every garment in the house came under her inspection: summer clothes were made, winter clothes were mended and laid past; but this also came to an end, and the twitching had not worked itself out of May's fingers.

She was now really at a loss; but a child came to her gate with a tale of a sick father; and May packed a little basket, and set off over the country to seek for the ailing man. A great many other tales were told to her after this, and for another good long spell of time she went trotting about after sickness with as much zeal as a sister of charity. But the weather was

getting balmier every day; and, in time, her patients all got well except one old man who died; and May's active brain and limbs found themselves arrived at a full stop.

By this time it was early summer; and there had come no more news from Camlough than if it had been an island in the far seas, and boats had not as yet been invented. The Wicked Woods had put forth all their most splendid leafage; and Miss Martha's farm was a pleasant sight to look upon, with its meadows and cornfields and newly-blooming gardens. The wild roses were in the hedges, and the hawthorn and honey-suckle clambered on every wall, and peeped in at every window. All the sweets in the world seemed to abide at Monasterlea, except the one which sweetens all others,—peace of mind.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SIMON DOES HIS OWN WORK.

In the mean time, Simon had been anxiously expecting his nephew, who strangely absented himself, instead of hastening to complete that engagement which he had almost entered into with his employer. The old man's head was now as busy with Scotch shepherds, as that of his ancient predecessor had been bewitched by the dream of multitudes of spreading trees. He wished to exterminate every peasant, and to cut down the idle woods. He wished to see herds of sleek animals grazing over his land, to have his money in large sums, and no risk about getting it.

He did not know what his nephew could mean by staying away so long, having expected the young man to return to him immediately, lest a terrible threat which had been uttered should be fulfilled without delay. Yet the weeks passed on, and Paul did not appear; while the old man chafed and fretted about his house, and roamed out into the woods, cursing his nephew and his own wretched fate, since he did not find one creature in the world whom he could trust.

Tibbie observed him from her secret hiding-place, and knew the cause of his anger; watched her opportunity, and presented herself before him. She had hung up her mandrake in a corner of the kitchen, where it surveyed all her labors and her idlings. Confident in her possession of good luck, she did not fear Simon; and her shrewdn suggested the best way of dealing with aggrieved master, who scarcely listened her penitent speeches and professions attachment, but seized on her offers of vice with the greatest eagerness. He in bad need of a messenger, and Tibbie ready to go anywhere. Yes, she would in search of Paul Finiston, though she kn very well that he had gone to Camlou After a long day's absence, she came b with her news: Paul had gone away for own amusement, and no one in the coun seemed to know when he would return.

Simon's rage at hearing this was extre Tibbie slunk away out of reach till his sion was exhausted; and then, when found him feeble and prostrate, with ther voice nor breath left, she ventu again before him, and talked as she ha mind to talk. She told him that Paul iston never had intended to work for hi that he had wanted to be his heir, and t was all, laughing in his sleeve while pretended to be his servant. Of course was now the heir, and would amuse him as he pleased till such time as his unc death should put him in possession of gr wealth. Fine people were courting h because of those riches which he boast must be his; and he reckoned on havi enough to spend in his lifetime witho troubling himself about laying up an i crease. Having made these statemen Tibbie went back triumphantly to h kitchen, no longer to hide, but to reign in former times. Simon was glad to hav her at hand; for, his rage expended, he wa feverish with new plans. He would be kin in his own kingdom; and Tibbie should, fo the moment, be his minister. Tibbie shoul go in search of the bailiff, so that notices ejectment might be served without delay and if the people refused to move, why the Simon, having cast off Paul, would prov that he could yet do business without hel from his unworthy kinsman. He woul hire some stout assistants, who must at lea do their duty by him for a day; but long than one day he would trust no man agai

Tibbie set off on her errand on a mer summer morning, and she went greatly o of her way to carry her news across t mountains. Con followed after her heel but he was busy watching the squirrels the trees, and the leverets on the heat The world was gay for the fool; and he gre merrier and noisier as he got nearer to t clouds: he knew that he was going a visi ing to his friends up in the hills.

The first house they arrived at was hap Bid's. The old woman was preparing f

a ramble through the country with her basket of wares. The basket sat on the table full of little pictures in brass frames, pin-boxes, and pin-cushions, dressing-combs, and rosary-beads, tin brooches, and glass ear-rings, besides many other valuables fit to make eyes dance at her coming. By it lay her staff. The fire was raked on the hearth in preparation for a long absence of the householder from her home, — that home of which she was so proud, and which had made her old age so honorable. The place looked as clean as a new pin; and she had got a chair for a visitor, and a little stool for herself, a very tiny table, and a dresser with some crockery. Three gaudy pictures, with brazen frames, were hung round the walls, and gave the place quite a splendid look. The first was the Nativity, the second the Crucifixion, the third the Resurrection of the Lord; and these made a history, which were as Scripture for Bid, to whom the alphabet was but a string of hieroglyphics. All these delights she had tasted and enjoyed; but Tibbie had come to tell her that the feast was at an end.

Bid herself, queen of her castle, came forward to meet the visitors, brimming full of the good-humor of hospitality. She was dressed ready for travel in the usual long gray cloak and bright scarlet kerchief; she had also a new white cap, whose borders looked as fresh round her pleasant face as a spring hedge round a garden. By such signs of luxury one could see the change in her life. Well might she smile on visiting neighbors, even though Tibbie should come among them. She had not much to offer to any one, besides a seat on her chair, and a sight of her pictures; but to Bid's manner of thinking this was no mean entertainment.

Tibbie was presented with the chair and Con with the stool, and Bid sat down on her floor, which was well-nigh as clean as a satin couch.

"There'll be a bit of a note comin' to ye, by an by," said Tibbie, "but may be ye won't be able to read it."

"'Deed an' I can't," said Bid. "Ye'll tell me what'll be in it?"

"That's aisy done," said Tibbie. "Ye'll be out o' this, bag an' baggage, before this day month."

Bid, who had been so happy, turned as white as her nice clean cap.

"Anan!" she said faintly; but she knew the whole story well.

"Yer bad ways is found out," continued Tibbie, speaking loud in the pride of her office. "I wondher yer not ashamed to steal yer lan'lord's land. Ye thought to sit here free because the old man was dotin'; but he's not dotin' a bit; an' he's doin' his work himsel' these days. He'll be up wid ye in a fortnit's time, an' I advise ye not to sit waitin' for him."

Poor Bid listened with meekness: she was indeed overthrown from her glory; her old hands fell lax in her lap, her very cap-border hung limp by her cheeks.

"Because, having lifted me up Thou hast cast me down." So said Bid's dim eyes, which had no thought of rebellion in their sadness. She only found suddenly that she could no longer be a queen. It was plain that the Lord had not loved her in her pride.

"It's all right, ma'am," she said, plucking up her spirits; "on'y there's wan thing I would ax ye. Would a small trifle o' rent be like to make a differ? The basket has done beautiful wid me; an' by manes o' the pinch of hunger I could save up a little somethin'."

"Sorra bit o' differ," said Tibbie. "Simon wants the lan'. There's gran' rich cattle fellas comin' to the hills; an' it's not the likes o' you that's goin' to stan' in the road o' sheep an' fat bullocks. I'm thinkin' Simon's tired o' gettin' his money in ha'-pence an' pence. But I'm too long talkin' to ye; I must be off to the widow Kearney's."

At the sound of her friend's name the expression of Bid's meek face was changed. A look of lively terror came into her eyes.

"The Kearneys!" she cried. "Oh, ye niver meant the Kearneys! Yer niver goin' to them on the same arrant ye came to me?"

"May be not," said Tibbie, "but I know my own business."

Con had been hovering about the cabin, looking at Bid's pictures, and hanging with rapture over the treasures in her basket. When Bid cried out "the Kearneys!" in a tone of anguish, he started and gazed at her, and his white face turned red. Then he looked at Tibbie; and his brows began to lower, and he went and took his stand by the side of Bid.

"Nan!" said the fool.

But Bid was too much afflicted to give any heed to him. Her eyes had now got fire in them, and her figure had lost its limpness. She got up, and grasped her staff, and prepared to follow Tibbie;

"He threwn them out wanst," she said, "an' will he threwn them out again! What ha' they done to Simon but pay him his heavy dues? The Lord, sure, will be even wid him wan day for the like o' this!"

"Curses does no good," said Tibbie virtuously.

"I do not curse," said Bid; "but oh, Mary, my poor frien', it's the says'll get you now!"

Con was white again, and he listened with all his ears. He knew there was come some trouble upon his friends; knew that Bid was grieving for them, and that Tibbie had brought the grief. He handed her staff to Bid, and pulled her to the door. "Nan!" he kept saying, "Nan!" But Bid wept loudly as they went along the heath.

The Kearneys saw them coming, and many smiling faces appeared at the door; but the smiles soon faded away into looks of sorrow and amazement. Who had seen Bid cry since she buried her last child?

Mrs. Kearney went out full of sympathy to meet her weeping friend.

"O Mary, my poor woman!" said Bid, "it's the throuble that's come to yer door!"

Tibbie now played her part, and announced the miser's will.

"It's none o' my fault," she added sulkily, as she met the frantic eyes of the mother of many children. Mrs. Kearney threw her apron over her face, and retreated into the cabin; but Nan stepped up, and spoke to the bearer of evil tidings: her blue eyes flashed, and she tossed her yellow locks.

"Don't come here again," she said, "or ye'll have cause to rue the day. What do we care for Simon when the Lord has give us Paul?"

"Paul, inagh!" sneered Tibbie. "It's much he cares for the likes o' you! He's dancin' an' singin' at Camlough; an' ye'll all be out o' the country afore he comes back."

"We'll not be out o' the country," said Nan. "We'll walk, if it was on our knees, till we find him, an' tell our story."

"Ye needn't walk on yer knees, nor on yer head neither," said Tibbie; "for he wouldn't lift a hand for ye if he was here this very day. An' what's more, if he would, he has no more power nor you have. Simon has cast him off, an' is doin' the work hissel'."

Nan bent her fair head, and a cry went out from her lips. If Paul was taken from them, then, indeed, their case was desperate.

Bid and Mary were together weeping in the cabin, and the gossoons were on their knees comforting their mother. Con had been an eager listener to all that passed between Nan and Tibbie, his shifting gaze becoming every moment more pitiful when turned on the one, and more lowering when directed towards the other. Nan's sharp cry seemed to madden his simple brain. He turned into the cabin, and seized a creepie stool, heavy enough to break a human skull. Tibbie saw him flying out of the doorway, with face of fury, and the stool swung above his head. She cried out loudly, and fled a few paces, then had just time to stoop before the "creepie" whizzed over her shoulders. Death had been very near her: she retreated hastily, and disappeared behind the rocks; while Nan laid hold of Con, and dragged him into the cabin.

After this, Bid and the Kearney family held counsel together as to what there was to be done in this sad strait: Paul was their only hope, and he was gone to Camlough. The only thing they could think of was that Bid should go without delay to Miss May at the old abbey. If there was any tale or tidings of him she would have it, without a doubt.

Bid took up her staff, and set out with a heavy heart. She arrived at the little gate, and walked up through the pretty rose-garden, and round the back way to the kitchen.

"Yer welcome!" said Nanny, with her fingers on her lips; "but ye'll plase to make no noise, for our young misthress is sick."

This was bad news to Bid, but she came in as invited. She was far too discreet to speak to the servants about Paul, but asked to see Miss Martha; and Bridget went to tell the old lady, who was sitting in May's room. The chamber was very silent, the blinds were all drawn down, and the figure in the bed lay with its face turned to the wall.

"It's Bid the Thraveller, ma'am," whispered Bridget; "an' she wanted Misther Finiston. An' whin she couldn't see him, she's axin now for Miss May."

"You needn't have come in," said Miss Martha; "Miss May is too ill"—

"Let her come in, aunty," said May, sitting up in her bed.

"My love, you know you are ill"—

"I have plenty of time to be ill, aunty: I want to see old Bid."

Miss Martha was obliged to relent, and Bid was brought into the bedroom. Miss Martha warned her not to stay too long, and went away to give some orders to Nanny.

Bid coming in, leaning on her staff, saw two hollow eyes bent on her out of a white eager face.

"You are good to come to visit me, Bid. Have you got any news for me?"

"Ill news, honey — nothin' but ill news. There's cattle comin' till the mountain, an' the poor'll have to go; for Simon's taken to mind the lan' hissel'. But it's cruel o' me to be tellin' ye this, and yer cheeks the color they are."

"Never mind my cheeks, Bid: tell me all about it."

Bid told her the whole: how thirty families, for the first instalment, were to be turned out of house and home; how the very huts they had built of the mud, and hollowed out of the sandy cliffs, were priced so high above their heads that they could not hope to pay for them, even if they were able to live like the flowers, — on air and the dews from heaven. How some that had paid heavily for many a long year were to go now at last, no matter what they might promise. This one was bound to go, and that one was going too. At the Kearneys, Bid broke down. There was no hope for the Kearneys, and the old woman could tell no more.

"Your own little house, Bid. That will be safe enough?"

"Oh, throth!" cried Bid, tossing her head, "it's little matter about a body like me. I was thrampin' long enough, an' I can take to the thramp again; but I thought if Mr. Paul was to the fore, sich business couldn't go on."

"I think he would try to prevent it, but you know he is not here. Mr. Paul is gone to Camlough, and we do not see him now."

Bid looked at the strained fevered eyes, and at the little wasted hands, that were locked so tight together; and she knew how things were going here, and that there was no hope at all.

"You see," she said evasively, "it's goin' this ways wid Simon, that he's comin' near his death. The misers o' Tobereevil does always get a bit harder an' crueler afore their end. It's the way the curse works in them, an' the Lord on'y knows why it should be. Who it is that'll come after him there's no one now can tell, since he has cut off Misther Paul."

"Cut him off, did you say, Bid?"

"That's what I said, an' sure it's little ye need vex. On'y the poor need fret, that doesn't know who'll come over them."

"Are you sure that it is true? Then I thank Heaven! Do you think, Bid, that when the property is gone to another, and he ceases to be the heir, do you think then that the curse will let him go?"

"I'm thinkin' that it will, honey; I'm thinkin' that it will. An' sure it's betther to be a poor body wid the blessin' o' the Lord, nor be rich an' have the divil playin' thricks on ye all yer life."

"Listen to me, Bid. Can I put a great, great trust in you?"

"God sees if ye do ye'll not put it to the bad."

"I want you to go to Camlough."

"I'll go, avourneen."

"I want you to go to Camlough, and to see Mr. Paul Finiston. You will notice what he is doing, how he looks, and how he speaks. You see, Bid, it is not natural, this that has happened to him; he is not the man to go away, and forget his friends. I don't understand the curse, nor how it works; but it seems to me that it puts his mind astray, so that his enemies have got power over him. He believed this himself, and I promised that I would save him; but now he is far away, and I am too weak to move. There is only one who can help me, and that is you."

"Tell me what to do," said Bid, drawing her cloak about her, and grasping her staff.

"Nothing," said May, "except to go to Camlough upon some errand of your own. Observe all you can, and come back to me with news."

Then Miss Martha returned to the room and the old woman went away.

CHAPTER XXXV.

PAUL AT CAMLOUGH.

SUMMER was very lovely at Camlough; bowery foliage clothed the mountain-sides with softness, and in the hollow the swards were brilliant with flowers; the castle gleamed out of a mantle of flowering bloom, and terraces girdled it with garlands as of fire caught from the sun. The gardens were hived with sweets, the trees heavy with perfumes that crept up into their boughs. The birds sang in chorus, the sea made a delicate music, and the peaks of the upper mountains crowned the valley with a sapphire crown.

Sir John had ceased to be uneasy about his unruly daughter. His head was full of things more important. He knew she was safe, and that the best way to manage her was to let her have her own way. But the mother could not so easily content herself; had grown more wretched every day that her child staid away from her, could no sleep at night nor rest by day. Her daughter's indifference was eating away her life. There was no peace about Lady Archbold;

her dark hollow eyes still glowed with restless passion; her haughtiness had broken up into querulousness. She was too feverish for occupation, and always at odds with Time for not quickening his lagging steps. She did not care for reading, for there was no story so interesting or so pitiful to her as her own. She looked into her past life by that envious and fitful light which such minds will fling backward upon joys from which they scorned to draw much sweetness while they lived. Why had the world failed her, having so many years been her slave? Why had pride ceased to charm, and the only love she coveted been denied her? Why had poverty threatened to pinch her with unknown wants, while bitterness and reproach must be her only solace in the trial? These were the hard problems which Lady Archbold had got to solve.

She walked with weakly steps about her room, but nobody had any idea that her life was nearly spent. Partly deceived by pride that would not complain, partly by rouge and pearl-powder, Sir John had no suspicion of the intensity of her suffering, or of the havoc it had made. On every one of these summer days her maid dressed her with infinite pains, arranging laces and satins, flowers and jewellery, as carefully as if her mistress had been a young belle going to court for the first time. On her face there were the red and white that simulated health; and her hair was not suffered to lose the rare blue-black for which the tresses of Lady Archbold had been famed. She thought, that, when her child returned, she should not see the changes which grief and disease had wrought upon her mother. Every day the poor lady sat in a chair filled with cushions, which was placed on the sward at a sunny side of the terrace, a lap-dog on her knees which she did not caress, by her side books which she never opened, fancy-work untouched, and a heap of fresh roses which she crushed to an early death in her hot fingers. Here she sat, watching for one who would not come, and here she still sat, when Katherine at length appeared riding out at the distance with Paul by her side. The mother could not bear the sight which she had so passionately longed to see. She fainted in her chair, and had to be carried to her room.

Sir John was right glad to welcome Paul. In his economic fit he had lately denied himself the pleasures of hospitality, being a man who could not choose to invite his friends to bear him company, unless he surprised them with the most costly entertainments; but he was now thoroughly tired of loneliness at Camlough, and pleased to see a man coming to share it. He had heard something of Paul, and felt an interest in him; thought him a fine young fellow, who would be a pleasant kind of neighbor, and likely to work some changes which were needed in the country.

For the first few hours after his arrival, Paul was in high spirits, and won golden opinions from Sir John. He was pleased with all he saw, pleased to get rid of Katherine, and to know that to-morrow he should return without her to Monasterlea. Above all else he was glad to find himself happy. Miss Archbold played hostess, as her mother was not well enough to appear. Her father praised her looks, declaring that the air of Monasterlea had done her good; did not reproach her, or remark in any way upon the manner in which she had chosen to leave her home. The only thing that clouded Sir John's enjoyment was Paul's determination to return the next day whence he had come. No persuasion would induce him to think of remaining longer than this one night. The master of Camlough was vexed at his obstinacy; but Katherine said carelessly to her father as she left the dinner-table: "Oh, do not trouble about it; believe me he will stay!"

After dinner, Katherine, her father, and Paul set out for a ride about the estate in the long soft light of the early summer evening, so that Paul might make the most of the few hours at Camlough. The excursion was a pleasant one, till, on their returning homeward in the dusk, a wild-looking man flung himself suddenly before Paul's horse, throwing up his arms, and uttering curses upon the whole race of the Finistons. Paul, always sensitive to the feeling of the poor towards himself, started with a great shock, and urged on his horse past this evil-wisher, who seemed to have started out of the furze-bushes to banish his contentment. Sir John lingered behind, and, after some parleying with the wayfarer, rode after his visitor, and rejoined him with a grave countenance.

"I am sorry to hear this," he said. "I have learned from the man that Simon Finiston is evicting the people."

"*Is* evicting?" asked Paul in amazement.

"Yes. This very day: the man says so. His own wife and children are among a hundred who have been turned out, without notice, upon the hills He was working elsewhere, and has been running all day on his way to Tobereevil. This is bad indeed. I had hoped you might have had influence to prevent such iniquities."

Now, this was many weeks before the

real evictions took place at Tobereevil; but here was one of the many occasions on which rumor declares that a thing has actually occurred long before it is possible that it can have happened. A whisper of Simon's intention had blown over the mountains, and taken the shape of the tragic story which Sir John now told to Paul.

A dark flush overspread the young man's face, and his head sunk on his breast. He seemed stunned by this news, the truth of which he never thought of doubting, and did not speak again until they arrived at the castle door. By that time the stunned feeling had left him, and his mind was in a flame. This iniquity had been done under his very eyes, and he had not seen it. He had been warned, and had not striven against the danger, His weakness in temporizing with the miser at that last interview now appeared to him as a crime of the darkest hue. His cowardice had wrought the evil, and the sin was on his head.

Not all Sir John's polite efforts, not all Katherine's fascinating attentions, could restore to Paul the good spirits which he had enjoyed an hour ago. He said good-night to his entertainers while it was yet early, and retired to the chamber which was prepared for him. When there, however, he did not go to rest, but walked feverishly about the room, thinking on his own weakness, and on the sad case of the poor, and loading himself with the bitterest reproaches. When at last he flung himself on his bed, he was ill in mind and body; and, when morning came, the guest was found unable to leave his room.

Thus began a fever which wasted Paul's strength for two or three weeks. Katherine was in great dismay, so much so that her father was surprised in a great degree, never having seen her show feeling for any one before. His concern as to the sick man was increased by this anxiety of his daughter. He agreed to all her arrangements, sent for the country doctor who attended to his own gout, and who lived on the western side of the Golden Mountain, inviting this gentleman to spend a fortnight at the castle. To the servants and out-door retainers it was merely said that the guest had got a cold. This was Katherine's wish: so Sir John made a point of it, though he could not understand it; and every care was taken to prevent a rumor of serious illness getting abroad. Katherine's old nurse sat by Paul's bedside night and day; and Katherine herself often stole in, and sat motionless behind the curtains, with looks so pale and distracted that no one could have any doubt but that the patient's life was at least as dear to her as her own. And it was understood that Miss Archbold was engaged to Mr. Finiston.

At last, after much suffering, Paul was able to rise from his bed. He was weak in body and mind, but this was to be expected for a time. Sir John gave him his arm as he walked up and down the lawn, and Katherine waited on him with dainties; but as the invigorating days of early summer passed over his head, and the body became strengthened, it was found very strangely that his mind did not regain its natural balance. His memory was a blank, his thoughts could not fix themselves on any thing for more than an instant. It was some time before Sir John could persuade himself that this failure of mental powers was so complete and unvarying as it proved itself to be. There were moments when Paul seemed dimly conscious of an extraordinary change within himself, and struggled to shake off the cloud which had settled on his brain, to remember whence he had come, and how he had brought himself to Camlough; but, as days went by, even this slight effort became too much for him. The past dropped away from him, and left him in peace. He was placid and calm, sometimes silent for long hours; sometimes talking with curious simplicity of the things around him. He shrank from society, spending his time roving aimlessly through the hills and little glens, or losing himself among the high green walls of the beech alleys. Lady Archbold, who had recovered from the attack of illness which joy had brought upon her, pronounced Paul a simpleton, and wondered why Katherine had brought him to the place; but Sir John rebuked her for so rash a judgment.

"You do not understand, my dear: he came here as intelligent a young man as could be found. This is only the effect of illness, and will pass away; for Katherine's sake we must be patient with him."

Lady Archbold refused to believe in the engagement. She did not wonder that Katherine should have bewitched him away from May, but she looked on Paul as a beggar as well as a simpleton. Sir John considered that it was time to change her mind, and took her to walk with him down the terraces in the glow of the setting sun, while two peacocks strutted behind them with their magnificent tails spread.

"Do you not notice how Katherine is altered?" said Sir John. "Her heart is engaged at last, and for that we must be thankful. A worthy affection will make her all that we can desire."

"I had no idea that you were so exceedingly unworldly," answered his wife.

"I do not pretend to be altogether unworldly: I could not afford it now; but this thing is fortunate from a worldly point of view."

"Fortunate!"

"My love, do not publish our conversation. I know a good deal of the history of Tobereevil. Its owners have been hoarding treasure for over three hundred years. They have spent literally nothing. Paul Finiston is the heir — in a short time will be master; and he seems quite untainted by the besetting sin of his family. I predict a noble career for him, and I cannot but think it happy that my fortunes should be linked with his. I have not gone to seek him, nor forced my daughter's fancy. She has had her own way, as I have always allowed her to have it. If the result is satisfactory, you are not to call me worldly."

After this Lady Archbold no longer called Paul a simpleton, but became anxious to see his virtues, and to behold his mind restored to health; the welfare of Katherine being, as usual, her only care. Nevertheless Paul did not grow wiser nor less fantastic in his ways. He would pass hour after hour picking pebbles from the rocks, and flinging them into the sea. He would sit high up in the hills, and hold converse with the sheep. The herds were half afraid of him, though they liked him; for, besides his singing to the sheep, they heard him declaiming to the mountains, with head thrown back, and arms folded on his breast, addressing the unconscious cliffs in lofty language. Whilst he rambled about in this way, Katherine was often seen hovering at a little distance. She followed him about like a nurse trying to guard a refractory child of whom she has some dread. She scarcely ever lost sight of, but seldom ventured to approach him. Her face had grown very white, and lost a great deal of its beauty, and her eyes had got a strangely timorous look. The people talked quite openly about Miss Archbold's engagement to a fool. She had been over hard to please, and now her heart was set on an idiot. It was wonderful to see her so meek, so absorbed in her care of one person, being never angry now, except when she heard whispers about her fool; then she would fly into such a fury that every one fled from before her face.

When many weeks had gone past, the parents of Katherine consulted as to what steps ought to be taken in Paul's case. The doctor prescribed amusement and excitement; so the heads of the people at Camlough began to devise plans for the diversion of this demented young man.

Things were just in this state when Bid arrived at Camlough, with her basket on her arm. She hoped to tempt the maids to buy of her wares; at all events her merchandise was to be the excuse for her appearance; and, coming over the lower hills that sloped towards the castle, it chanced that she met Paul face to face. She courtesied to him and nodded at him; but he never gave her a glance. The change in his looks struck fear to the heart of his simple friend.

"Misther Paul!" cried Bid, following him, "don't you remember me?"

He stopped and gazed at her, and shook his head.

"I never saw you before," he said, and walked on with his head drooped on his breast.

"O Heavens! what is this!" cried Bid.

"Misther Paul!" she said, following him again, "I seen Miss May yesterday. You never forgot yer own Miss May?"

Paul turned, and stared at her again with the same blank look in his eyes.

"I don't know what you mean," he said.

"O mother o' God! have you forgot her!" cried Bid: but Paul noticed her no more, only walked on and left her; and the old woman sat down on the heather, and wept till her eyes were sore.

A milkmaid was coming over the hills with her milk-pail on her head. She stopped, and looked at Bid, and asked her why she was crying. Poor Bid was too sorrowful to think of any thing but the truth.

"I met Misther Paul," she said, "an' not a bit he knewn me."

"Wirra whist, ould woman, don't you know that the man is mad?"

Now, indeed, it was Bid's turn to question; but for May's sake she remembered that she must be wise. She accepted the milkmaid's invitation to the castle, and sold a pair of blue glass earrings on the spot. She was brought into the kitchen, and afterwards had an invitation to the housekeeper's private room, where she disposed of all her jewellery, and was hospitably entertained. When she started to return homewards she had learned all that could be learned as to Paul's unhappy state.

As she came homeward over the mountains, her head was dizzy with grief. Paul Finiston mad! How could she carry such news to May. The hope of the country was gone on the wind; but, for the moment, she thought May's the hardest share of the trouble.

"She'll break her bit o' a heart," said Bid. "She'll turn to the wall, an' die."

When the old woman came to the end of her weary journey, and walked up the garden-path, she saw the blinds were still down in the cottage at Monasterlea, and she knew that May was no better than when she had left her. So Bid crept round to the back door as before, and stepped noiselessly into the kitchen. This time Bridget had no need to put her finger on her lip, for Bid's spirits were so crushed that she was as quiet as a ghost. Miss Martha came to her presently, and sent her into May's chamber.

Poor Bid had little art to break her terrible news. She told it out bluntly, in a burst of sympathetic sorrow.

"Oh, my dear!" she said, "there's little use in goin' to look for Paul. He's strayin' about yon hills like a lamb that's lost its mother. He doesn't know you nor me, nor e'er a wan belongin' till him. They say he's promised in marriage to yon bould, cruel hussy, that took him away wid her out o' here; an' she walking about afther him like a cat afther a mouse. But a woman might as well marry hersel' till our poor Con at home. God sees it's the black word to come out o' my mouth to yer ear, but our cliver gintleman has no more sinse left nor a fool."

May sat up in her bed devouring every word that fell from Bid. The old woman glanced at her as if she feared the news would kill her on the spot.

"I knew it," said May quietly. "I knew it was not his own will that did it. Now, Bid, I'll get well. Open that window wide, and bring me something to eat."

Bid stared at her vacantly.

"O Bid dear, don't loiter. Hurry, and do what I tell you, for I have no time to lose."

Bid did as she was told, putting her wonder aside to wait for another time. She opened the window wide, and the river and the flowers looked in at May. She trotted away to the kitchen, and came back with a basin of soup. Greatly amazed was Miss Martha to find May sitting up in her bed, and Bid holding a basin of soup to her mouth.

Miss Martha was very busy at this time. It was the hay-making season, and she had got to look after her laborers. So Bid staid with May; she sat by her bedside during the long summer day, telling her stories of the pleasant summer world out of doors. She talked, just as if she had got a sick child to nurse, of how the river was laughing on the stones because the sun was trying to dry it up; but the source in the mountains was too plentiful for that. How the cock was scolding his wives because the chickens were long about walking, and the young ducks were gone off in search of water to have a swim. Nothing sad did Bid tell to May; but every tale had life in it, and a sparkle of fun and joy.

The next evening Miss Martha found May up and dressed, and sitting at the open window.

"You see, I have got well, aunty," said the girl. "We have a great deal to do, and I can't afford to be sick."

"Thank God you are better, my darling; but what have we got to do?"

"In the first place, there are all these people who are to be driven out of their homes. We must try and do something for them. There will be sick people amongst them."

Miss Martha looked grave. "I am ready to do what I can," she said. "I cannot do very much."

"Bid has gone to the mountain," said May, "to see how things are going. She will be back here in the morning with the news. And, aunty, there is another thing — you and I have got to save Paul Finiston."

"Now, my love, forgive me; but I will not hear a word about that graceless young man. A person who behaves as he has done is never worth a thought. When your health is a little stronger, my darling, you will regain a proper spirit. Till then have patience, and do not mention the man's name."

May's face had become as white as the mountain snow. She caught the arms of her chair, and held them tightly. Some minutes passed before she spoke again.

"Aunt Martha," she then said, "you have not understood me. I will explain myself better, and you will not refuse to listen to me. Paul Finiston has lost his mind, and he is in the power of an enemy. I feel that he will never recover, never be the man God intended him to be, while he is here in this country, under the shadow of the curse which he has so feared. If he were away in some bright, new country the trouble would leave him; and he might there live his life as he ought to live it. Don't believe I wish for him here that I may hear his voice and see his face, for I am a truer woman than you think me. What I ask is this — do you take Paul to France, or to Italy if you like better, and place him with good people, and leave him there to God. I will manage here during your absence, and will be happy, feeling we have tried to save him. Now you know what I mean, aunty. Will you do this thing for the sake of your little May?"

Miss Martha jerked a tear or two out of her eye. She was impatient with herself for not feeling sterner.

"That is all very fine," she said; "but how am I to take possession of an able-bodied young man? Am I to ride to Camlough, and carry him off in my pocket?"

May had no longer any smiles for her aunt's fidgety little speeches. Her eyes gazed strangely out of the window, with that fixed bleak look which they had taken when Paul was expected and did not come — like eyes that had given up seeking for the thing that could give them joy.

"I do not know how that will be," she said; "I do not know yet."

She closed her eyes, and Miss Martha thought she slept; but she was pondering all the time over that difficult problem — how could Paul be carried out of the country and saved? She had no doubt at all that his present state was directly owing to the influence of the curse. Anxiety must have caused that sudden and mysterious illness which had left his mind a wreck. She thought of him happy and light-hearted as she had first seen him. Had he staid in that foreign country to which an honest impulse had driven him, he would not now stand blighted in his prime. It was she who had brought him into danger, she who had kept him under the cloud; and now she must send him away from her, so that his troubles might come to an end. It was only a poor comfort for her to know that he had already forgotten her, so that it would cost him no pang if he were never to see her again. Of her own future she did not dare to think.

Miss Martha's thoughts on the subject were very different. The old lady did not quite believe in the story of Paul's loss of memory, and suspected that Katherine had bewitched him, and that he had chosen to stay at Camlough. She had not, however, the heart to thrust such opinion upon May. If the child believed him mad, why let her believe so.

Meanwhile, Bid had arrived at home on the eve of a day of affliction. People were passing from one cabin to another, saying sad farewells, and mourning together over the woe that was come among them. The Kearneys were carrying their small possessions into a cave under a cliff, where they intended to live till they could sell their pig and their little bits of furniture. With the few pounds that such sale would bring they must start by and by, a sad and timid band of wanderers, to seek their fortunes or misfortunes in some unknown and dreaded town. Some others were doing likewise, thanking God as they worked, that things were not worse with them.

"Sure it's the summer sky we have over our heads," said one. "If a body must sleep on the grass, it's good to have it dhry."

"You say well," said another: "we're betther off nor the old people — heavens be their bed! What debate could me an' the baby make if the snow was blindin' our eyes, and freezin' our hearts."

"The Lord wouldn't let that happen twicet," said a third.

But there were others who could not make an effort to be cheerful: the people who had their sick and their dying to provide for. What could Tim's old father and little Bride's crippled grandmother do but die on the side of the hill? There was patient Norah in the last stage of consumption, and there was a mother of many children who had been bedridden for years. The children clung to their mother, who could not move, and moaned over the horror which the morrow was to bring to them; and the woman with the sick daughter sat with her arms round her dying child, and prayed with frantic earnestness that God would take her home before the cruel hour should come. Sympathizing sufferers passed in and out of the cabins, and wept a little with one, and wept a little with another; while each would rebuke her neighbor for the despair which she felt herself.

Bundles were packed, and Sunday clothes put on. In most cases where there was a strong healthy father or brother, he had gone away already to look for work in the nearest town, or in some other part of the country. Those who were to begin their journey to-morrow were all the weak, if not the helpless. People were dressed already for their travel; for there was no thought of sleeping on that last ever-to-be-remembered night before they left the homes that had sheltered them, never to see them more. They kept walking about visiting each other, all the short summer night; sitting round the fires for the few dark chill hours talking over their past, or trying to predict the future. Con sat by the fire in the Kearneys' cabin, his face dark with gloom, his hands clasping his knees under his chin, his eyes roving from the red hearth to Nan, and from Nan back to the hearth. The girl was busy meanwhile, making jackets for the little brothers, and cloaks for the small half-naked sisters, out of every rag of stuff she could find, including the bed-clothes. The little ones sat round her, awed into unusual hush, and

watching every stitch with the eyes of frightened rabbits.

"God help ye!" said a visiting neighbor, "but ye're the long wake family!"

Nan threw her head back, and stifled a groan.

"Misther Paul, Misther Paul!" she said, "thin why did you desave us?"

"Arrah whist!" said the neighbor: "could he carcumvint the devil?"

"Mick! the daylight's comin'. Will you run an' thry if you see a sight o' Bid?"

The neighbor went out sighing.

"Well, well, well! but the obstinate hope is in that girl!"

"She ought to ha' come back," said Nan; "she ought to ha' come back."

Here Bid and the house-mother entered the cabin together. The old woman had been detained, condoling and helping in many houses on her way.

"Well!" cried Nan, springing to her feet, and dropping her work.

"The curse is down on Paul," said Bid solemnly: "ye have ne'er a wan to look to but the Lord!"

Nan crouched on the floor, and buried her face in her gown.

"Get up, girl, get up! There's worse off nor you. Ye've all got yer feet undher ye, an' young blood in yer veins."

"Young enough!" wailed Nan, as a toddling child tumbled into her lap.

"Ye'll make yer mother break down," said Bid. "I looked for betther things from ye. Ye haven't the sick an' dyin' to take on yer shoulders. Get up now, an' be a woman, Nan Kearney; an' I'll show ye Katy Daly, that can't stir, an' her seven little girsheens all cryin' round her bed."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MAY IS BIDDEN TO AN ENTERTAINMENT.

When morning dawned, Bid went into her own little house, and stripped the walls of the pictures which had lent them such splendor, carrying with these her chair, table, stool, and basket all to the cave which held the possessions of her cherished friends. "Sell them wid the rest," she said; "for Bid will be Bid the Traveller to the end o' her days." It was not without a sigh that the old creature thus put out of mind her last earthly dream; but so many earthly dreams had faded from her, that one more seemed easy to forget. Having emptied the cabin, she left the door standing open, so that Simon, or the winds, or the foxes might take possession when they pleased.

Early in the day, Simon arrived with some stout ruffians ready for any mischief. It was a very great labor for the old man to climb the hills; but his duty was before him, and he accomplished it. He did not find much trouble in doing the work after all; and he perceived, with bitter regret, that he could have easily done it alone, without the expense of assistants. The people walked out quietly with their bundles in their hands, having already suffered the worst of the evil that had been thrust upon them. They had wept out the blaze of their hearthstones; they had broken their household gods with their own hands; there was only now to pass, for the last time, across the familiar threshold. In one house, indeed, there was found a little difficulty; for Simon, on pushing into it, came face to face with a corpse, the body of the poor consumptive girl who had died of fear in her mother's arms. Simon retreated in horror before the sight of death; and this house was left in peace.

The woman who could not move was lifted, bed and all, and placed on the hill. Later, friends came, took her on their shoulders, and carried her down the mountain to Miss Martha's barn, where a snug little chamber had been cleared for her in the straw. Her eldest daughter staid by to take care of her; and the other children were settled among the farmers in the neighborhood by May, who was now moving about. So this family was disposed of till the father, who was in England, could contrive to find money enough to bring them across the sea.

Miss Martha gave a lodging to many other tired souls that night. In the dusk of the summer evening the partings took place. There was wild wringing of hands, and weeping and embracing; for friends gathered from many parts to say good-by to the wanderers. The band of sad travellers passed away down the road, and disappeared like the shadows in a dream. They sang a wild "keen" in chorus as they went; and the shrill note of sorrow hung long, and vibrated in the still air. Faintly and more faintly it echoed in the night, the mountains replying to it as long as they could hear; then silence and darkness settled down upon the moors, and Simon's work was done. The shepherds and the cattle might come to the mountains when they pleased.

News had come over the hills of great doings at Camlough. It was quite a year since there had been any thing like an entertainment given at that place; but the whispers of debt and difficulty which had been multiplying like cobwebs over Sir John's fair fame for hospitality were now to be blown away upon the breath of much dissipation; and Camlough was to witness scenes such as the hills had never dreamed of. Guests were coming from England, the castle was filling rapidly; and a series of entertainments had been devised. In this way were the Archbolds carrying out the doctor's prescription. They were providing amusement for the heir of Tobereevil; and they were bent upon doing it well.

The first piece of gayety was to be a fancy ball, and guests were invited to it for a hundred miles round. It was a rare idea of Katherine's to send May an invitation. Miss Martha was not invited, nor was May asked to stay longer than just while the ball lasted. No carriage, no escort, no chaperone, no dress! Katherine smiled as she sealed the missive which was meant to make May weep.

It was a sultry evening towards the end of July: the sun had gone down; but the crests of the mountains were still at a red heat. Crimson and yellow were throbbing in the air, and the woods looked hot and dusty; for the dew had not as yet begun to fall. The garden paths were baked, the roses hung their heads, and May knelt on the ground, tying up the rose-trees, and gathering their fallen leaves. The sky made a wall of flame at the back of the Golden Mountain; and May's thoughts were beyond the mountain, and seemed to scorch themselves in the flame. A servant in livery rode up to the gate, and Bridget came down to the garden with a note for her young mistress.

May read the note; and, as she did so, the blood rushed to her cheeks and forehead, till her eyes ached with the heat, and refused to read any more. Then the flush ebbed away, and she walked into the house as white as a ghost.

"Aunty," she said, "look at this. I am going out for a walk;" and before Miss Martha's spectacles were fairly set on her nose, May was several perches across the heather.

Lines of shadow were tracking out the hollows of the moor, and there were brazen lines beside them. May seemed walking all the way through wreaths of fire; but she noticed nothing of that, having fire within her heart. Castles were burned to cinders in the sky, crags quivered in flames, and were left charred and spectral. The fires were vanquished at last: twilight came, and a veil crept over the brazen brow of the woods. Fevered nature drank the dew, and slept. It was quite dark when May came in from her walk. The fires then were also quenched in her heart; but a daring thought had been moulded into purpose while they burned.

In the morning she had written a note and burned another before her aunt appeared.

"I thank you, Katherine Archbold, for giving me an idea," she said solemnly, as she tore the pretty letter, and burned it in little pieces.

"A wilful piece of impertinence," said Miss Martha, entering the room as May held the last fragment to her taper. "So plain that they did not want you when they never mentioned me. They might safely have paid the compliment, not fearing we should go. So plain that they did not want you."

"Very plain, indeed, aunty. I shall take them by surprise."

"My dear," said Miss Martha faintly, "what did you intend to say?"

"That I have accepted the invitation," said May; "and I mean to go."

Miss Martha dropped her hand, which had been raised to grasp the teapot. She looked astonished, shocked; then pained and angry. For some moments she was speechless.

"My love," she said at last, "you are surely not yourself. You do not know what you are saying. You"—

"Do not say a word till you hear my plan," said May quickly. "If I fail, you may talk to me in any way you please, or you may scold me if I succeed; but you must not hold me back, for, aunty, this is the enterprise of my life."

"Tell me what you mean," said Miss Martha, with the air of a person whose mind is made up to the worst. Then May unfolded her plan; and her aunt, with many misgivings, was obliged to allow her to put it in practice.

May having got her will, began to follow it in curious fashion. She had first to consider about a costume in which she could appear at a fancy ball, and went about her duties with her mind set on queens and heroines, and especially on their wardrobes. She visited all Miss Martha's ancient stores, lumber-rooms, and closets, deep drawers, and seldom-opened chests, looking for possible treasures of color and material, and hoping for an inspiration as she went

along. There was little to be found that could suit her purpose till Miss Martha at last produced, a little reluctantly, some yards of carefully-saved light-blue tabinet which had been part of her own mother's wedding finery; and upon this May seized at once with greedy hands.

"Give it to me," she said earnestly: "indeed, it could not be used for a more sacred purpose."

This fragment of the past, some old black velvet, and some clear-starched muslin, were the best they could find to suit her purpose. A pair of long gold ear-rings, with a gold cross to match, presented to Miss Martha while she lived in Normandy, decided May as to the costume which she must assume. She must make the best attempt she could at the dress of a Norman peasant. Miss Martha gave help in designing the apparel; and by the aid of her aunt's memory, and the suggestions of an old water-color drawing done in Miss Martha's governessing days, May cut out the garments, and set to work. When Bid arrived from the mountain she was told that the young lady wanted her, and was taken into her chamber, where Miss May was stitching busily, and with plenty to say to Bid.

In one of Miss Martha's outhouses there stood an odd little vehicle, which had been much used in its time, intended to be drawn by a mule, and called a wagon. It was covered with close curtains of a dark green stuff, and had a seat running round the interior supplied with hard green cushions. The floor was matted, and many people have travelled in a less comfortable equipage. On the night of the fête at Camlough this wagon stood in waiting under the thick-set hedge at the lower end of the garden at Monasterlea, having found a hiding-place, since its driver wished to escape all observation from the road. There were many strollers abroad on this particular night, who watched for a glimpse of the carriages that had been rolling past all the evening. It was now getting late, and the carriages had ceased appearing. They had a long way to drive after they had passed by Monasterlea.

May had been tired that day, and had gone to bed early. Bridget had brought her some tea, and Miss Martha had given orders that she was not to be disturbed again that night; so the servants had gone to bed, and the place was very quiet, though about eight o'clock a young Norman peasant was standing in May's chamber, trying, with shaking hands, to fix Miss Martha's long gold ear-rings into her ears. Her short, blue, quilted petticoat, and bodice of black velvet, her shoes, white muslins, and ornaments were complete. Her hair was rolled away tightly under the tall white cap, her cheeks glowing with excitement, her eye flashing from place to place to see that nothing was forgotten. May had a trying time before her; and she was not going to turn coward, but rather to strain every nerve for the accomplishment of her enterprise. Now she was all ready, missal and beads in one hand, and a small black mask in the other. Miss Martha wrapped her closely in a long black cloak, and lastly embraced her; and the old lady was trembling like a thorn-bush on a windy day.

"My darling!" she said, "give it up even now. If any thing were to happen to you!"

"Now, aunty, who are you going to send to do me harm?"

"If only the servants were to find it out — how humiliating that would be."

"But you know the servants are not going to find it out. If there were any chance of this, I'd have done it before them all. We don't want it talked about, and that is the whole thing."

"Well, the day is past when I was mistress: you are your own mistress now. Go, in God's name, and may he hold you in his keeping!"

A few minutes afterwards, May was seated close by Bid in the little wagon. Mrs. Kearney's eldest gossoon had taken the management of the mule: he touched her with his whip, and May's adventure began.

It was a hot still night, and very dark; but the mule and the gossoon knew the road on the Golden Mountain. May kept back her curtains, except when the sound of coming wheels warned her of other travellers on the road. The world seemed a mass of ragged and confused shadows, with here and there a startled light flashing out of a hollow. The stars blinked drowsily on the edge of the sombre mountains, as if they could scarcely keep their eyes open in the heat. The air was filled with the rich scent of hay, the sweets of many flowers, and of the dew-laden thyme and heath. The journey seemed to May like the whole length of a day and night; and yet the mule did its work bravely. When the travellers caught sight of Camlough, it was just one o'clock in the morning.

Below them in the hollow lay a fairy scene. The illuminated castle stood like a castle of light in the slope of the dark

valley; and tents lay spread beneath it, which seemed also made of light. Many-colored fires encircled the inner rows of the trees; and the foam-curves of the sea just glinted through the distance in the gleam of the late-rising moon. The wagon pulled up in the shelter of a little by-road which led off Sir John's great mountain-road, just above the gates which separated that great road from the drive to the castle. The mule was tied to a tree which hid the wagon, and the gossoon lay down beside it to doze in the grass; for Bid and May left him, and disappeared behind the brae.

They threaded their way very cautiously at first through bushes and ferns, by little tangled paths that wandered down to the level lawns and gardens, pausing, at last, in one of those long beach-alleys which spread their mazes over part of the grounds. To-night these alleys were lighted with colored lamps; and here and there a gayly-dressed pair enjoyed their privacy, sauntering together apart from the crowd upon the lawns.

"Now, God A'mighty purtect ye, honey!" said Bid, in a frightened whisper, as she removed May's dark wrappings, and beheld her standing trembling in her strange attire, and about to be left alone. "Ye'll know yer way back to the boreen, avourneen. I'll wait for ye there, for 'fraid we might miss other."

May nodded, and bent back the branch of a tree with both her hands, and the next moment she found herself in the crowd.

For the first few moments she felt sick with fear; but she had not come there without first assuring herself that she had courage for the adventure. The privacy which was insured to her by the wearing of the mask, gave her a certain amount of confidence; and she kept where the crowd was thickest, so that she might not be observed to be alone. A lady or gentleman near her might be presumed to be her protector by any one who took a thought upon the subject; and she felt that she must be safe while she kept her presence of mind.

It was a curious sight even to eyes that were accustomed to festive scenes. If May had ever been "out" in the world, even in the mildest sense of the word, had ever danced at a ball or mixed in any gay crowd, the present experience might not have been so wonderful to her; but, after a life spent in solitude, it was not unnatural that a scene like the present should take away her breath. After a time, she controlled her wonder, and drifted along with the crowd, becoming a part of the pageant, which seemed to grow familiar to her, as if in some other life she had shared in it before. She had made acquaintance with such a picture between the leaves of some old romance; and presently she became aware of this truth, which gave a fantastic unreality to all that she heard and saw. This very unreality was an assistance to her enterprise, for she could not feel greatly frightened at people who only seemed part of a dream. She was half carried along by the crowd, her eyes not dazzled but charmed by the subdued color and glitter of the figures moving along with and around her, her ears not troubled by noise, but soothed, with happy murmurs, and softened music. The large tents on the lawn were filled with flowers, and refreshment tables were spread in them; and people sat among the flowers, or came in and out at will. A band was playing somewhere, and there was dancing on the lawn; yet, from the sounds that came from the castle, and by the flashing of brilliant figures past the open windows, one could see that this out-door entertainment was only the lesser portion of a curiously splendid whole.

As the crowd shifted about, May attached herself, first to one group, and then to another; and, in this manner, made her way half way across the lawn. She scanned anxiously every face that was uncovered, and every masculine figure that came within reach of her eyes, expecting a change in Paul, yet not knowing what appearance the change might take. She found herself watching the movements of a quadrille, in which Haroun Alraschid was dancing with a gypsy; it was a gay, fantastic picture, but Paul did not make part of it. She peered into the last tent, which she had left uninspected; but there was no Paul anywhere as yet to be seen.

What if he were too ill to appear, and shut in some upper chamber of the castle. The thought was not to be entertained, but, even in passing through her mind, left a trail of horror behind it. She battled off the idea, and renewed her energies in the search. Might he not have escaped from the crowd, and be wandering in some of the dim alleys, or even down by the sea? She gazed towards these quiet places, but dared not venture near them till her search in the crowd had been thoroughly made.

Meanwhile, Paul and Katherine were dancing at this moment in the chief drawing-room of the castle, Katherine having kept her hand on Paul's arm ever since the first guests had made their appearance. May's acceptance of the invitation had

caused her great amazement, and no little dread. A hundred times she told herself that it was utterly impossible the girl from Monasterlea could keep her word, yet had all the time a latent conviction that May meant what she had said, and an unacknowledged faith in her power of doing any thing that she had deliberately undertaken. And then what change might be wrought in Paul by a sudden meeting with her? Would it bring back his memory all in a moment, and with it his love for May and dislike of herself? These thoughts were not good for Katherine, as she walked about with her hand on Paul's arm, making search through the rooms for May. As soon as she espied the unwelcome guest, she would put Paul into safe keeping, and go off and dispose of May; for it must be the business of the night to keep the two apart. So her hand did not leave Paul's arm; and people pointed out Miss Archbold and her very singular lover. Now, while May hesitated outside the walls, uncertain whether to enter in at the door or peep through the windows, Katherine and Paul were dancing in a quadrille. Katherine was dressed like Marie Antoinette in a robe of white satin, with her fair hair powdered, and dressed high above her head; and one could hardly look away from her, she was so beautiful.

All this excitement had a singular effect on Paul. It had certainly driven away his stupid placidity, and his eyes had a wild brilliance. His movements in the dance were quite correct: he did what other people did; yet people watching him closely would say the man was out of his wits. Katherine watched him closely as they danced together; if he happened to turn his head she turned her head also in the same direction, being not easy in her mind while he crossed the floor in the quadrille. She scarcely breathed freely when he passed out of the reach of her hand.

The reception-rooms of the castle led one from another, and the windows came to the ground and opened like so many doors. They were all flung wide now, with curtains of silk and lace meeting lightly within the opening. May passed along outside, looking through the windows into each room as she went; and she did this very cautiously, for fear of attracting notice to herself.

So at last she caught sight of Paul, and Katherine in all her glory by his side. A great blow smote upon her heart, and her impulse was to turn at once and run away, to leave this false lover to a new love, new friends, and new magnificence. Was it not shame for her, May, to come here stealthily looking for him? Let her turn, and go home quickly, and leave these happy lovers to their dance.

But, no: he was neither false nor happy, and she would not move an inch. He turned towards her suddenly; and it was not Paul's face, though the face of no other man. Oh, how had they been dealing with him that he had come to look like this? She saw plainly with her eyes the thing that Bid had described to her; Paul, and yet not Paul—a man whose mind was gone.

The dance over, Katherine took Paul's arm again, and moved with him towards May's lurking-place. May's eyes followed the pair, and Katherine looked even more proud and determined than usual. Her face was saying quite frankly that she had always had her way, and intended to have it always. She could break a hundred hearts to get her will. She had now laid aside all fear of seeing May's unwelcome face; it was past one o'clock: impossible that any guest should arrive at so late an hour, and she had taken note of every lady who had until now presented herself. So Katherine made up her mind to put this dread away from her. The rooms were very hot, and she wished for air, and stepped out of a window, still holding by Paul's arm. May, who was watching her movements, followed near as they crossed the lawn.

Katherine sauntered up and down for a while, had some refreshment, spoke to everybody, and caused a little sensation wherever she went. She made the circuit of the whole lawn, while the poor little Norman peasant who was following upon her footsteps began to feel her heart beat wildly; for the moon was already setting, and signs of approaching dawn were becoming visible in the heavens. True, it was still dark; but how long would the darkness last?

Katherine at last seated herself in a satisfied way upon a rustic bench under a tree; in a moment was surrounded by flatterers, and relinquished her hold of Paul, who remained standing by her side. People did not mind him much; but they paid eager court to her, one fanning her, another offering a smelling-bottle, and all expressing the conviction that she was intolerably fatigued. Katherine yielded herself to the flattery, and received the homage which was precious to her; and, in her greediness over the feast, she forgot her vigilance as to her charge. Paul was pushed a little here and a little there; and, by degrees, he became separated from her,

and strayed, overlooked by the crowd, in the purposeless way now habitual to him. His look of excitement had passed away, his head had sunk on his breast, and he took no notice whatever of the scenes going on around him. May alone watched his movements, and, after a time, had the happiness of seeing him direct his steps towards those dim quiet alleys which had latterly become his accustomed haunt. He crept under the trees, and was alone in a dark walk walled by high hedges of beech.

He hesitated, as if uncertain where to go; and May's heart died within her as she saw that here was the opportunity which might never occur again. Would he go down towards the sea, or move upward towards the hills? While he wavered, the hum of merriment came swelling through the trees. May expected that at any moment figures might run through the woods in search of Paul. Not yet — not yet; and, meanwhile, he walked up the alley which led to the woody hills. May waited then, just a very little longer, till the bushes and young trees had hidden him from the view of the possible pleasure seekers in the alley. Then she sprang on lightly, and was at his side.

"Paul, Paul!" she said.

He stopped short suddenly.

"Who spoke?"

She put her hand lightly on his arm.

"It is May — it is I. This is my hand. Don't you know me?"

It was so dark here that he could not see her face; but her voice was enough for him.

"Know you?" he cried. "Of course I know you. Where have you been so long? — and I have been so wretched."

He had got her hand now.

"Where are we this moment?" he said. "I do not know — I cannot remember. O God! I cannot remember."

"It doesn't matter about remembering," said May. "You have not been well, and this place is hot good for you. I have come to fetch you away. You will not object to come with me?"

"What is not good for me?" said Paul. "And tell me where I have been. I cannot remember any thing. My mind is all dark."

He spoke in a wailing tone, very terrible to hear from a man. It shook May's heart; but she only said, "Never mind — hold my hand, and let us keep close together?" He obeyed her readily, and they plunged on through heather and furze-bushes, through trees and loose stones, up the rugged hills, getting every moment higher up into the air, and further removed from the castle lying glittering in the hollow. May trembled, thinking of her light dress, which she feared might attract attention; but she forgot that the merry-makers were surrounded by artificial lights, and their eyes too bedazzled to be caught by a speck of white up on the distant heights.

The fugitives pushed on together towards the rugged part of the hills, climbing slippery rocks and threading mazes of furze. Paul, in his helplessness, clung to the hand that dragged him on. He knew it was May's hand, and that May was beside him; her voice had aroused him so far as to feel that a great affliction had come upon him, that he had quite lost his memory and powers of thought; but every idea fled away from him as quickly as it was grasped, except that May had long been lost to him, and that he had found and was trying to hold her. The shimmering castle, the fire-wreathed trees, and tents of light, all danced and shifted very far below them now as they sped along; looking like sparks in burnt-out ashes when the children cry, "Look at the soldiers marching!" By and by the clouds broke up suddenly, and the sky became of a chill and pallid gray. Stones, furze-bushes, and thorn-trees were to be seen peeping out from the darkness with an ashen look as of fear upon them; but then May and Paul had reached the road, and found their friends ready in waiting for them. They seated themselves, one at each side of Bid, in the vehicle behind the tree; the curtains were closely drawn, the gossoon cracked his whip; and Miss Martha's little wagon set off on its journey home.

The mule trotted well; yet many a time before the journey was over had the wagon to get under a hedge, so that fine carriages might pass it on their way from the ball. The midsummer morning grew rosy above their heads, birds sang blithely; and the peasants whistled and lilted as they went to their work: but the travellers did not enjoy these pleasant signs of life, and would sooner it had been dark till home was reached. May sat in a corner of the waggon, holding Bid's arm, while Paul slept like a child, with some straw supporting his head; and in his sleep the marks of a change were very visible upon his face.

Bid saw them as well as May, but she pretended not to think much of them. "He'll be Paul Finiston yet," she said, "in spite o' the devil."

It was twelve o'clock in the day when the wagon was guided into another byroad, and Paul and May got out to walk to Monasterlea, which was only a mile away.

l stifled her heartache, and talked merry chatter as they strolled along the daisies. Paul heard her with and held her hand fast on his arm; id not know where they had come r did he remember any thing that ›pened. Miss Martha saw them hing; and so also did Nanny, who ing vegetables in the kitchen gar-

ha, thin," said Nanny, returning ıouse, "what for did you tell me y was in her bed? She's comin' e road wid Misther Paul; an' the her cloak turned over her head."

l!" said Bridget, "I could ha' sworn 't lave her room to-day. An' so wid Misther Paul! God sees it's ime he took a thought o' comin' us!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HE FOOL'S DERELICTION.

Kearneys retired to their cave, and id with them. He made himself heather and ferns, on which he slept ght, lying across the mouth of the elling like a mastiff at his master's he cave was as good to him as the ıd been; and, so long as he could f and water for Nan, and get his n her hand, he cared very little for as happening in the world. The ner days were long and fine, and ts short and starry, and the moun- t the same mountain as before; was seen to look sad when he ıe empty houses of the people who e away. He would sometimes stop wl, and mutter to himself about and had once been caught flinging own the cliff in the direction of the s of Tobereevil; but his queer fits n soon spent themselves on the air. arneys were beside him, and he was little knowing of the plot which ng hatched for the destruction of e of mind.

Kearneys, nine in family, were now take the road out into the world, old their pigs and furniture, and hemselves with no longer a pre- r lingering among their mountains. ay they had a well-to-do friend, om they hoped to borrow money, with what they had got to bring ross the Atlantic. Once in a new country, when their hearts had bled away the sorest throes of grief, they hoped to earn a living, and to build up a new home with the toil of their many hands. Save for the anguish of memory, they would no doubt do very well.

But now a difficulty arose. What were they to do with the loving fool? They could not take him to America; there was no question about that; and to leave him alone in some city to which he might follow them would be a cruelty of which they could not even think. Hardship and starvation must be his portion in a town, while at home in his familiar mountains he would always have friends enough. So Con must be left behind; but how were they going to escape from him?

He followed Nan everywhere, keeping his eyes on her, as if he feared she would vanish if he closed them. He did not sleep soundly as he used to do, but lay all night awake and watchful, ready to spring up if any sound alarmed his ear; or, when he did fall asleep, the slumber was so light that it was broken by the whimper of a plover. His friends knew very well, that did they try to set out without him, he would follow, while he had strength to crawl, were it through flood or fire; and that no man might seek to hold him back. Yet the Kearneys must surely go, and Con be left behind.

At last a plan was hit upon to cheat him. Some lads who lived at a distance, came and coaxed him to go with them for a day's climbing in search of an eagle's nest, and Con the fool forgot his vigilance, and fell easily into the snare. After a long and exciting day, scaling high rocks, and racing along upper ridges of the mountains, he returned to the cave where he expected to find his friends. He was weary, and his steps lagged as he came along in the ruddy heat; and his fool's heart leaped as he caught sight of the dear hole which was the door of his home. He looked for the gossoons coming to meet him; for, if Con did not reason, he knew the habits of every living thing around him. This evening there were no gossoons about the hills, and Con was disappointed, and quickened his lagging steps. He went into the cave, but the place was empty. Neither the Kearneys nor their bundles were to be seen. Con was surprised; and his heart sank, just as a wise man's will sink under the chill of disappointment. He consoled himself in the best way he could, by drawing together the embers of the fire, near which had been left for him a heap of turf and a pile of potatoes. He need not be cold or hungry

for this night at least, even though his friends who had cherished him were gone away. To-morrow, indeed, he must look for another home; but of this Con knew nothing, while he set to work upon the fire, kindling it up deftly as he well knew how to do. Nan would be coming in to make the supper by and by; and Con laughed in his crowing way to think how glad she would be to see the blaze. She would laugh along with him, and pat him on the head. The fool was used to such treatment, and knew what he had to expect.

The fire burned up and down again, and would have burned out, too, if Con had let it; and still no steps and no voices came near the cave. In vain he strained his ears, sitting cross-legged at the fireside; Nan's gay laugh did not come blowing round the cliffs, and no shrill whooping in the distance announced that the gossoons were coming home. Even the shrill voice of the house-mother scolding the little ones would have been melody to the ears of the now anxious fool. Many times he started, and rushed to the mouth of the cave, fancying that the lads were whistling on the brae, or the children crying and calling in the distance. These sounds, so exciting, led him often round the hills and past the corners of the rocks, but proved a cheat. The curlew and the plover were bidding each other good-night, and that was all.

The red hue had fled away from the heath, and the stars had come to light The mountain was deserted indeed. Con sat, the only human being among the empty cabins, feeling his own loneliness, which horrified him; growing afraid to look out any more through the opening of the cave, and crouching close to the fire, as the only thing that could comfort and protect him. He fed it continually, and trembled when it got low; did not eat nor sleep, but sat clasping his knees, and listening with the vigilance of a hare; but nothing came near him, nothing moved save the ashes that kept crumbling at his feet. The breeze moaned and sobbed through the chinks in the cave, and Con lamented and wept. The tears of his desolation wet his hands and his naked feet.

As soon as the oppressive darkness withdrew from the realm where Con reigned alone, the poor fellow started from his watch-fire, and set off in quest of his friends, wandering up-hill and down-hill; calling, whooping, whistling. The sun rose and gave him courage, and he went on confidently, hoping to meet the little crowd of Kearneys lurking, for mere mischief, behind a heathery knoll, or racing up to meet him from below ridges of waving broom. He mistook a slender bush for Nan as it courtesied and becked to him in the morning breeze, and shot forward as if on wings, thinking he saw a group of little black heads nodding, which must surely be the children at their play, but which proved to be clumps of loose broom blackened by the fires already kindled in preparation for the shepherds. After each one of these failures, Con lifted up his voice and wept aloud. He met no one all day, so deserted was the mountain. He got up to the highest peaks, higher than he had been the day before when tracking the eagle. Foxes fled, and wild birds cried at his approach; but nothing human did he meet. "Nan, Nan!" he shrieked; and the echoes enraged him, mocking back again with "Nan, Nan!"

Towards evening he came down from the clouds, and made his way back to the cave. The place was as solitary as when he left it, and the fire was dead besides. He took flints from his pocket, and struck sparks and made a fire; but silence and desolation still reigned round him as before. He walked round all the cabins, rattled at the locks, and peeped in at the windows; but not so much as a mouse did he find to make response. He returned then to the cave with the sickness of hunger upon him; ate some potatoes, and started again on his quest.

This time he descended to the lowlands, and after sunset was coming along a moor, beyond which lay some green fields, when he met a little girl carrying a milkpail. She was a lowland lassie; but every one knew Con, and she was touched by the sight of his tear-bedabbled face. She offered him a drink out of a tin which hung to her pail; and Con drank greedily, and then looked eagerly in her face.

"Nan," he cried, "Nan."

"Och, thin, poor boy," said the pitiful little maid, "is that the ways it is wid you? Ye'll be lookin' long for Nan afore ye set eyes on her. Sure, Simon has settled wid them all, the creatures. Simon has sint them away."

Con stared at the girl with open mouth and eyes, till the vacant look dropped away from him like a mask, and his face became dark and convulsed with wrath. He uttered a long, savage shriek, which startled the herds at their evening meal, and made the goats look down inquisitively from the cliffs at a little distance. "Simon!" he screamed, with murder in his voice, and flung himself on the earth, and tore the sod with his hands. The little girl was terrified, and ran away and left him.

All the agony of his desolation fell now on the fool's heart; for the word "Simon" had been enough to suggest to him that Nan had disappeared forevermore. He raged and wept; tore his clothes and his shaggy hair; but by and by got to his feet again, and began running towards the woods. Very glorious they looked, decked out in all the hues of the evening sun. Many a summer evening had Con disported himself in their shelter, swinging from bough to bough, laughing and crowing in delicious happiness. Now they flamed with rage at him as his eyes flamed at them.

There lay about two miles of trees between Con and the mansion of Tobereevil; and twilight had begun to fade when he plunged into the thickets, pushing right and left, crashing through the underwood, his pale face livid, and a lurid gleam of purpose burning for once in his vacant eyes. He knew his way well through the darkest labyrinths of the woods, and he went straight to the destination toward which he had set his face. It was wonderful that he did not dash himself against trees, trip over the brushwood, tear his feet with thorns, or cut his hands with piercing brambles as he swept them out of his path, yet no such ill befell him. He passed easily and without scath through savage places from which another would have come forth bruised and bleeding: shot like lightning across the dark spots which Tibbie knew so well, and trod out the baleful life-juice of wicked herbs beneath his feet. The trees groaned and rocked as if they knew that there was a vengeful spirit among them, who, unconscious as he was of the evilness of the evil, was yet possessed of all its power which he would use for their destruction. Deeper and deeper plunged Con into the woods; and the perpetual roar of the trees arose to a tumult, with a shriek in the voice of many, a frantic wrath in the movement of the swaying multitude, as if the woods, knowing their doom, as also the spirits of wickedness that lurked in them, had found themselves at last and irretrievably undone. Or was it that the breeze was a little livelier than is usual on summer nights? At last a tree stooped down in fury, caught Con by the hair and smote him on the face, breaking some of his teeth, and making the blood start out of his flesh. His heart was full of murder, and he turned to wreak his vengeance on the tree; beat it, smashed the lower branches with his feet and hands, while the foe stood as straight as ever, roaring in malicious triumph over his head. Other trees joined in chorus with it, and they scoffed at him where he stood quivering like a pygmy among giants; but his cunning served him now that he might wreak vengeance on his enemies.

He took flints out of his pockets, and struck sparks, with which he tried to burn the skin and fingers, that is, the bark and little twigs, of his stalwart foe. This would not take effect, and then he tried another plan. Groping among the feet of the trees till he had swept up in a pile dead leaves, rotten sticks, withered herbs, and bits of bark, all so dry and tindery with the hot breath of the summer that it needed but a spark to kindle them into a blaze. The spark was flung amongst them, spark after spark, as Con wrought to make a fire out of them, and triumphed. The fire hissed at his knees, and the rocking of the trees fanned it into intensity, and all the underwood around him became wrapped in flame. Fire was a thing that Con had always loved, and now he laughed as he beheld it do his bidding. He gathered up burning sheaves and flung them into the trees, tied stones among wicked sticks and crackling leaves, and impelled them wrapped in flame into the upper branches. The trees roared and groaned again as the fire went into their hearts, and flung themselves upon each other to try and extinguish it; but the flames ate into the wood, and the scorching breath of the one sent destruction into the bosom of another. When Con saw that his work had taken effect, he dashed from the spot and fled forward as before, with his face towards the mansion of Tobereevil.

The miser was very restless at this time. Even since he had taken things in his own hands, and found that he could do his own work so well, he had grown more impatient of the little progress he made in money-getting, and more feverishly ambitious of doing better in this respect; the event of the shepherds seeking his mountain gave him new and broad ideas as to the amount of capital which might yet be wrought out of the stones and heather. One day people might come asking to make a quarry among his idle rocks; and, in anticipation of this moment, he marked off many new names whose owners must be taxed severely in preparation for their departure when the quarry-seekers should arrive. The workers of the quarry would want dwellings for their families, and should pay him a good rent out of their wages. The manager of the works would need a comfortable residence, and the best farm on the estate must be put at his disposal. He would doubtless be very rich, and inclined to pay nobly for the

accommodation so needful to him. Simon reviewed in his mind the many farms which belonged to him, and decided that the manager of the quarry would prefer to have Monasterlea; it being rich and fertile land, which had been cultivated for years, and the master naturally liking to be near his works. So Miss Martha was written down as having to "flit" as soon as the quarry-seekers should have arrived.

All these plans made Simon very restless. He could not bear to wait while his dreams realized themselves slowly out of the future. He thought that events which were to come ought to come at once, and meantime while they delayed the suspense was a torture which wasted his life.

All that day, on which Con had searched for Nan, and fired the woods, Simon had wandered restlessly about his house; indoors and out of doors; unable to sit still for a moment to reckon his treasures in his memory, or to remember about where he had hidden his keys. He went out gleaning, this being harvest-time for Simon, as well as for the farmers his tenants. He knew from day to day what fields were going to be reaped, and followed like a spectre in the trail of the reapers. Some of the richer or more generous would leave ears on the field purposely, so that the wretched old man might not be disappointed in his quest; but to-day he had to glean ground over which he had passed before, and there was little for him to get. Still, with great toil, he succeeded in finding a few stray ears, besides sundry little wisps of straw; and had added to these treasures little scraps of rags and down, and some cold potatoes which had been forgotten in a field. With these he was coming home: but his limbs trembled so violently with that anxiety about the quarry-men, that he spilt the best of his spoils, and the breeze carried some of them away. Upon this he wailed and wept, so enfeebled was he by his cares, but was consoled by seeing a fine bird's-nest between two branches of a tree. He poked it down with a stick, and found it lined with soft wool plucked from the backs of sheep. "What wickedness and waste!" cried the miser as he ripped it up. "It is shocking to think of the robberies which these creatures commit on man!" He found eggs in the nest, however, so that his day did not go for nothing.

He was standing at the foot of the tree, picking the nest to pieces and carefully stuffing the wool into the pocket of his garment. His thin white hair fell on his shoulders, crowned by a hat so frail and discolored, that it seemed to have been placed on his head more in mockery than for protection. His thin sharp face — long keen nose, greedy eyes, and twitching mouth — was bent over his task with all the avidity of an eagle that has found its prey. The worn and many-colored garment clung around the skeleton limbs; and the sun laughed over its wretchedness, and pointed out its rents and patches. He was standing close by the cottage of a poor tenant whose field he had been gleaning; and, as he tore the bird's-nest, a boy sprang suddenly forward.

"Ah, sir! Don't tear the robin's nest, sir! Indeed it is the robin's: I saw her fly out this morning."

"Well, you young rascal. A useless, thieving bird!"

"Oh, sir! don't say that, sir! The robin that bloodied his breast when he was tryin' to pick the nails out o' the Saviour's feet!"

The child looked up as he spoke with a face full of earnestness and horror. It was as if he had been begging for the life of a little human playfellow. When he named the Saviour's name, Simon shrank back from him with a look of terror, throwing up his trembling arm with an impulse to screen his face from the child's gaze. He dropped the nest, and the boy picked it up, and ran away; but Simon had the wool and the eggs safe in his wallet. Nevertheless it had not been a good day, and he was in a restless and hungry humor. For his dinner he bruised down the ears of wheat, into a paste, boiled the bird's eggs, and warmed the cold potatoes; and these, with a draught of water, made a meal which was quite enough. There was a dead thrush in the larder, but that must do for to-morrow. "Now that I have some prospect of doing well at last," said Simon, thinking of the quarry, "I need not spoil every thing by extravagance!"

It was quite evening; and he still walked about, strolled some way into the woods, rubbing his thin hands together, and pondering his new scheme. The glorious harvest sunset cast a halo around his wretchedness, and flung after him trails of solemn splendor as he glided into the thickets. He was thinking as he went, that, after all, it might be better to have the useless woods cut down. True, there would at first be some expense; but what a heap of money all this timber must produce: these idle giants might gradually be changed into golden pieces. It was not the first time that Simon had thought of the plan; but it had seemed a part of the fate of the masters of Tobereevil to cling with great faithfulness to the trees of the Wicked Woods, and to resist every temptation to lay them low. There was some-

thing in the fact that every thing which involved expense at the first starting was sure to be shunned; but Simon had gathered confidence from the success of his negotiations with the shepherds, and from the impending success of the quarry. He did really entertain the idea of cutting down the woods.

The air grew more glowing as the sun sank nearer to the hills, and the trees basked in the golden glare. Simon thought not of the beauty of the world, nor of the blessings that fall from heaven, as he tottered in and out of the thickets, planning their destruction. Now that he had made up his mind to the idea, he became almost delirious with impatience to have the value of the woods poured in gold into his lap, and walked about feebly, guiding himself by the branches. Thus did Simon take his last walk in the Woods of Tobereevil. He had resolved upon their ruin, but another had been before him.

He returned to the house, and again felt the impossibility of sitting down quietly to think of the riches which promised to flow in upon him, so wandered through his melancholy mansion, up the staircase, all aflame with the setting sun, past the black burning nymphs, past the mutilated Flora, with her gay and floating garments, and away through many solitary chambers. He was in a busy mood this evening, and he wanted to see if there was any thing under his roof which he could turn to profit, — any thing which he had overlooked and allowed to go to waste with that carelessness and extravagance of which he had never been able to cure himself. He looked angrily at the fragments of discolored velvet which hung above some of the windows. Perhaps from these the birds — robbers who came through broken windows — picked some of the rags and wool with which they lined their nests. Rags were worth money, and these rags must be fetched down and sent to market. He gloated over the few pieces of worm-eaten furniture which remained in the stately rooms, and which he resolved should be sold at a high price to the quarry-master who was to live at Monasterlea. He went up to the lobby where the goblin presses stood, containing those precious heir-looms which the peddler had forborne to buy, ascertained that the goods were safe, and foresaw that some other merchant would be found wise enough to purchase them. Coming down again through the house in the gathering of twilight, he bethought him suddenly of a third great plan for the increase of his store. He would take down the mouldering mansion of Tobereevil, every stone of it, and turn it also into gold. These quarry-men would need good dwellings, many more than were to be found upon his land; so he would sell them his bricks and beams, his door-frames and window-frames and fireplaces; and another heap of gold would be the result. This third vision was too much for him: his head began to reel with the splendor of the hopes which spread before him. By the time he made his way to the lower staircase, all the heavenly fires were burnt out for that day; the nymphs released from torture, and sleeping tranquilly, with the stars shining in at them. When at last he sought his chair of rest in his own particular den, he was utterly exhausted with his hopes. He tottered to the stand on which his pistols always lay, examined, and found them loaded, and placed them on the table beside him before he would sit down. The window shutters were open, that he might have the last lingering light to bear him company as he sat; for neither candles nor fire were to be thought of in such weather. Very soon he would bar the shutters, and go to bed. He sank back in the chair, and closed his eyes, opened them again, and started, with his gaze fixed on the window, seeing Con's white face glaring at him with a dreadful look of meaning, through the pane.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A STRANGE NIGHT.

When Miss Martha saw the condition into which Paul had strangely fallen, she agreed with May that it would be well to remove him to new scenes, and leave his restoration to time and Providence. Her anger was at once lost and forgotten in her pity; and she began to pack her trunk in preparation for a journey which must begin before twenty-four hours should go past. There was no reason to fear that Paul would refuse to accompany her, and every cause for haste, for the mood of his mind had changed since his arrival at Monasterlea. He no longer lived in that quiescent condition which was almost a state of unconsciousness. Things which he saw around him here seemed striving to arouse his memory, and a struggle was beginning between the reason obscured within him, and that power by whose agency he was afflicted; the result being

a growing irritability which threatened to increase to wildness did he remain long in the atmosphere which induced it. So Miss Martha made preparations for her journey, while Paul wandered in his restless fashion about the fields and moors; and May hovered between the two, now silently helping her aunt, now seeing that Paul was safe. Her face was white, and her eyes had that look in them which we turn upon the dead; yet she was ready with her hands, and had her wits about her, and did not heave a sigh, nor shed a tear.

When the Kearneys, watching their opportunity, had left their cave in the mountain, they had sought shelter for a night with a friend in the lowland, about a mile away on their road from Tobereevil. Here they must wait for the eldest gossoon, who had been hired by their friend Bid to drive her on an errand to Camlough. The Kearneys waited gladly, suspecting that Bid's mysterious journey had something to do with Paul; that she was making an effort to save them, though she had not thought fit to inform them of the venture. The errand was one of importance, that the house-mother knew; for had not Bid got a loan of Miss Martha's little wagon-cart for the journey! Now, when the gossoon had made the mule a bed in the stables, put the cart in the shed, and left Bid enjoying her breakfast at Monasterlea, he ran off to tell his mother that Mr. Paul had come home at last.

Then Mary, the mother of all the Kearneys, rose up and thanked the Lord for sending her this friend, who would take the trouble out of her heart. So easily will people grasp at hope, that Mary began to believe that Paul came all the way from Camlough for the sole purpose of forcing Simon to restore her to her home. She would go now to Monasterlea with all her children round her, and relate to young Mr. Finiston the dismal tale of her distress; but first, ought not she to wait to see if Bid would come and fetch her? She waited till past sunset, and yet Bid had not appeared; the truth being that the old woman was engaged with Miss Martha, and knew that the Kearneys would not think of departing till she went to see them off. Bid would not quit Monasterlea till Miss Martha and Paul were fairly started on their journey.

But Mary Kearney had not patience to wait for this. As soon as twilight began to fall she started with her children, and walked to Monasterlea. Paul was walking up and down the road with his head bent on his breast, and his hands clasped behind him, in that dreary, restless way which was habitual with him now. He stopped now and then, and passed his hand over his forehead, and threw up his face with a look of pain, as if he strove to recover his memory at one bound, whereas it would only return to him by slow degrees. Sometimes he stamped his foot in despair, or kicked the pebbles out of his path, as if they had angered him. His mood was indeed changing, and it were well that he was out of the country. Suddenly Mary Kearney and her children came round him, it being still just light enough for people to see each other dimly. They came lightly along in their bare feet, and surrounded him swiftly and suddenly, Paul starting as if ghosts had risen up to confront him. This sensitiveness in itself was evidence of a change: a few days ago he would not have started if the strangest visions on earth had passed under his eyes.

"God save you, Misther Paul!"

"Mrs. Kearney!" cried Paul, looking keenly in her face.

"See that, now! — how well he knew me, an' it dark!" said the woman. "Lord love you, Misther Paul! it's you that had the wish for us. We have walked the roads back to get a word wid you."

"What is it?" said Paul, with something of his old air. It seemed as if the start with which he had greeted these old friends had helped him in his struggle, and shaken some of the mists out of his brain.

"It's on'y our little trouble, sir. I mane that Simon — that's the miser — I mane yer uncle, sir, has threwn a heap o' us out of our houses, Misther Paul. O' course you know that sir, an' some o' us is dead an' undher groun' out o' his road. an' some o' us is gone across the say. Some is gone to beggary; but I'm here yet mysel', sir, wid the little girshes and gossoons. An' I made bould to tell mysel' that if I seen a sight o' yer honor you would remember ye had a wish for us, an'd put a word in wid yer uncle to let us go back to our little house. We built it a'most oursel's, sir, when he threwn us out before, an' little Nan's gettin' a clever han' at the basket makin'. The gossoons'll be men after a bit, plase the Lord; an' there's not an idle bone in them, an' they'll pay it back to yer honor."

Paul stood listening, somewhat like a deaf man who suddenly found that he could hear; his eyes fixed on the woman while he devoured all her words.

"Simon put you out!" he said. "Is that what you have told me? Simon, the miser, put you out? You and how many others?"

"Thirty families, sir. Sure I thought yer honor knewn it."

"I did not know it," said Paul, "or I should have seen to it before. You may go now, my woman, and I will settle with Simon."

He walked quickly up to the cottage; May met him on the garden path, and looked at him in amazement; his eyes were flaming, his mouth was moving nervously. He was walking straight towards the door, and did not see her.

"Paul!" she said, "oh! what is the matter?"

"Nothing," he said fiercely, "only I am going to settle with Simon. This has been a long time delayed. I was born to do it; and look at me, a man come to my time of life, and my work still undone! I have been astray this long time; I had quite forgotten my duty; but a messenger has just come to remind me of it. Simon has driven out the people to die about the world. He has repeated the sin of the first Finiston: it now remains for the last one to punish him, and put an end to this foul race!"

He pushed into the hall, and took his gun down from the wall.

May said, "What are you going to do? Come in here, and tell me;" and she drew him into the parlor, and turned the key in the lock behind them.

"Do?" cried Paul. "Why, of course, I will shoot him through the heart. I often told you," he said testily, "that I have got to do this thing, and you would not believe me; but now you shall have proof of it."

"Very well, but you must wait a little. You have nothing to load your gun with: your things have not arrived."

"That is most provoking. How soon will they be here?"

"Oh! in about half an hour; in the mean time you can rest yourself, so as to be better able for your work." She shook up the pillows on the couch, and he flung himself impatiently upon them, taking out his watch to count the minutes; while May, hovering about the room, began telling some laughable story. After a time he gave her his attention, and put away the watch. Presently, she began to sing softly a drowsy lullaby, which she had heard mothers singing to their babies in the cabins; and Paul listened to her tranquilly, having quite forgotten his passion as well as the cause of it. At last he lay so still that she turned her head cautiously to observe him, and found that he was asleep. She brought wrappings, and covered him, so that he might rest there safely during the night; for it was now eleven o'clock, and she hoped he would not wake till the morning. She locked him in the room, and the household went to rest.

Yet May could not sleep, only lay staring at the little pools of moonlight on the floor, and wondering about the ending of this sad drama, in which she played so sore a part. Would Paul ever get well again? Would he, indeed, seek the miser when he awakened on the morrow, and accomplish in his madness that doom which he had dreaded before the madness came? She could not sleep while there was so much to be prayed for; that Paul might be saved from impending evil, and guided into the keeping of good and faithful hands.

In the midst of her sad thoughts she heard a noise, and sat up and listened intently. Surely that had been the sound of a window opening! She did not wait a moment, for there was but one thought in her mind. She went swiftly to the parlor door, and opened it softly, softly. The moon shone into the room; the window was wide open, and Paul was gone.

She dressed herself rapidly, and fled out of the house, hurrying down the garden and out on the road. She could see a long way before her in the clear midsummer night, which is scarcely night at all. Paul was not to be seen, but her lively terror could only lead her flying feet in one direction. She sped, like the wind, towards Tobereevil, thinking as she went along of the likelihood of the mansion being well barred up, so that no one, not even a madman, could make his way inside the walls. She should find Paul wandering about the avenue, or in the woods, or about the windows; would find him and bring him home.

Her heart beat so quickly, and her feet went so fast, that she had often to pause for breath, leaning against a hedge or tree, straining her eyes everywhere in hopes of seeing a figure, either behind her or before her on the road. At last she was obliged to go more quietly, lest, having utterly exhausted herself, she should faint at the sight of Paul, and be of no further use to him.

The beautiful calm country lay all around her, the hills wrapped in solemn shadow, but with lustrous peaks crowned with stars in the sky; sad glimmering fields and moors with all their human lights extinct at the moment; the patient and melancholy land that had suffered and smiled and been beautiful under the tread of many afflicted generations, born to a cruel time, but perhaps to a kind eternity.

"How long, O Lord, how long?" seemed written over the wistful face of the valley. The woods had caught no tender glance from the moon, but rolled in black masses against the sky, as if the surges of their wicked restlessness would flood the fair face of the heavens, drowning the innocent stars which grew like blossoms of light therein. Thus appeared the woods in the last hour of their magnificent pride and might, even while there was a red spot in the midst of them that glowed and pulsed like an angry thought in their heart.

May did not notice it, as she pierced her way through the crowding trees to the avenue. She had seen smoke and flames in the distance when she first set out on the road; but fire-wreaths were common on the mountain now, and the sight had been no surprise.

As she drew near the dreary mansion she sickened at the thought of approaching it with such a terrible fear in her mind. Was it not altogether fantastic this journey of hers in the midnight? How could she have allowed terror so to work upon her, — knowing Paul as she did, and that he would not hurt a fly? A man quite unarmed! What harm could he do to another, even if Simon's doors and windows were not locked and barred! Perhaps even now he was safe at home, having returned to his rest after roving a little, in his wild way, about the fields. Admitting these thoughts, she leaned tremblingly against a tree, and again strained her eyes towards the thickets and across the moors.

The gray early dawn came creeping over the scene; frown after frown dropped from the trees, and groups and masses of unknown something threw off their sombre mystery, and became broken-down fences, clumps of ragged hedge, pieces of ruined wall, or bushes of unsightly shape! The bogs showed their dreariness, the river threw up a steel-like ray, and the marshes gave forth pale glimmers of beautiful hues; a gray look of awe was on the face of the waking world, as if the coming of a new day had been a fearful and unexpected boon. The dull shoulder of the mansion rose above some bristling trees; and there was a great roar in the air coming from the distance. May noticed it without thinking of it, for every one knew of the grumbling of the woods; but the trees of Tobereevil had never made such a sound as this before.

She told herself that she had much better go home, yet could not bear to turn till she had first walked round the mansion to see that the fastenings were all untouched, and that no wandering footsteps, save her own, were about the place. There was a dreadful fascination for her in the nearness of the stern gray walls: she could not turn her eyes away, and began walking quickly towards them.

She had been there but once before, and did not quite know her way among the vagrant bushes and straggling trees to the front of the house. She found herself at the back, and walked round many sides and gables, noticing with relief how well the windows were barred, and thanking God for the miser's caution, which was good for something at last. "When the back is so well guarded," thought she, "it is not likely that the front will be found neglected. The door will be locked and bolted." Then May came stealing round the last corner of the house. But the hall-door was lying open!

A cry of anguish rose in her heart; but the sound of it did not come through her lips, as she drew near the open door hoveringly, as a blessed spirit might approach the mouth of hell, seeking for some lost one, sorely afraid to enter, yet impelled by the love that is stronger than death. She could not but go in: her feet carried her across the hall, moved by the same fascination which had drawn them towards the trees. Away to the right was the door through which Paul had passed with Simon on the day when they had first met as uncle and nephew, when Paul had consented to share the miser's interests and to touch the miser's gold. That door led, as she knew, to Simon's sitting-room; and it also lay open. A second threshold was crossed — she advanced a few steps, and did not need to go farther. Simon was sitting in his chair; his head lay back so that the face was almost hidden, his arm hanging over the chair, the long skeleton fingers nearly touching the ground. The old man was a corpse, his breast covered with blood, and blood lying round about him on the floor.

This was the ghastly spectacle on which May and the cold dawn looked in through door and window. A terrible cry — of more than fear, of more than horror — rent open May's lips, and made the old house echo as it had never before echoed, even to the cries of the lamenting winds. Simon did not stir, nor was any thing startled within the cursed walls except the echoes. May tried to fly, with some vague idea about saving some one spinning round and round in her dizzy head; but, though the spirit might will, the body would not obey, and she fell on the floor of the

hideous chamber. For a long time she lay there silent, motionless, dead, — like a second victim to whatever hatred had spilt an old man's blood on the floor by her side. While the long spell of silence lasted, the light grew clear in the room; and the dreadful sight it looked upon became more fully revealed in all its details. It was a colorless, gray morning; the sun had not yet risen, and yet there was a bright red glow lying on the ground outside, and creeping like a gilding round the window frames. It shone in through the panes, and danced with fearful frolic over the awful figure in the chair, glancing on May, and dyeing her white dress, while the feeling of life returned gradually into her body. At the risk of bringing madness with it, consciousness came creeping back to her.

She wakened to life again, struggling with a pain at her heart, which seemed trying to crush it, that she might have death and peace; but her healthful youth would not have it so, and out of her struggle came recollection, and with it the strong will and self-forgetting impulse which had already carried her so far in this adventure. She rose to her feet, and staggering, indeed, and still half-stunned, and covering her eyes with her hands, that she might not behold again the sight that had nearly killed her, she fled back across the hall, and out of the house.

Then she found herself wrapped in the glare of the burning woods; hissing and roaring the fire rolled towards her over the heads of the nearer trees, which were not yet drawn into the furnace, though it shone right behind them. Clouds of smoke blotted the heavens, and were luridly pierced by the flames which seemed to escape with every groan from the hearts of the perishing trees. Now that it had got mastery over the woods, the fire spread with a terrible rapidity, licking up root and branch, devouring oak and beech and chestnut, wrapping away in its embraces stalwart trunks and writhing boughs, and opening up such a raging abyss between heaven and earth, that it seemed as if the spirits of fire had been let loose out of their kingdom, and the world having been given up to them, the last day had begun.

May stepped out from the shadow of the grim house into a scorching atmosphere, that made her eyes grow dim, and her breath seem to burn. Her dress, her flesh, her hair grew hot, so that she felt as if already wrapped in the flames, while the fire half encircled her at the distance of about a hundred yards. With still the one idea of Paul's madness possessing her, the thought flashed through her mind that this new horror must be in some way owing to it, — that he himself was even now buried in yonder furnace. "Paul, Paul!" she shrieked in a high, shrill note that pierced the smoke-clouds, and reached farther than the bellowing of the trees; and, bereft of all reason, she rushed frantically towards the flames.

A few wild steps, and her feet stopped again. What was that? Oh! what was it? Not the roaring of the trees, nor the hissing of the flames; not the groaning of the newly-attacked giants, whose bodies were girdled by fire, — not like to any of these was the sound that made her stop. It was Paul's voice calling to her. "May, May!" it cried, in a loud and ringing voice; and it was not coming from the fire, though, if it had summoned her from thence, she would have obeyed it. It was coming from behind her, from the side where lay fields and meadows, and the river cooling the land.

"May, May!" This time the voice sounded nearer to her. Paul was not far away, he could see her, and was calling to her; and it was not the voice of a murderer nor that of a madman, but the clear, honest voice of Paul Finiston in his senses. May knew it of old: it was a sound sweet and unhoped for, and each echo of it pierced her brain with perilous joy. The revulsion of feeling was so sudden that it almost robbed her a second time of her senses; and, as she wheeled around to obey the call, she doubted her own sanity, and moaned aloud piteously in the agony of uncertainty. Was she, too, mad, and did she imagine happy sounds which could be heard no more on earth?

She began running towards the direction from which the sound had reached her. When the hot mist that had obscured her eyes cleared away a little, and allowed her to see, she perceived Paul coming to meet her, walking rapidly, pushing his way through the bushes from that side of the wood not as yet approached by the fire. It seemed as if he had descended from the mountain. He was quickly at her side, and threw a protecting arm round her.

"You are going to faint," he cried. "What can have brought you out here alone?"

May shuddered, and shrank from him.

"Simon is dead!" she said. "Simon is murdered!"

Paul started. "Simon murdered!" he said, awe-struck. "What do you mean? How do you know?"

"I mean — I know — O God, Paul, O God! — tell me you did not do it!"

"I?" Paul drew back, and looked at her with horror.

"Forgive me, forgive me! I think my senses have left me. O Heaven, what I have suffered! Oh, this terrible, terrible night!"

"My darling, calm yourself! You are distracted by the sight of this extraordinary fire. It has frightened you out of your sleep. It is very strange and awful, but can be traced, I do not doubt, to some simple cause, — the great heat of the weather, or some sparks from the fires on the mountain. You were raving just now, saying that Simon had been murdered: the fire has not reached the house, and he shall certainly be saved. I was hastening to look after him when I caught sight of your white dress."

May looked in his face with a puzzled, wistful gaze.

"Paul!" she said, "are you sure you are in your right senses?"

Paul smiled, though he was uneasy, thinking her a little crazed by fright.

"I think I am," he said. "I feel like a sane man. I am more in my right senses at least than you are!"

Still she looked at him wonderingly and fearfully.

"Do you remember last night?" she said.

"Yes," he answered, smiling, and willing to humor her. "I do remember last night: should you like to hear an account of it? I wakened with the moonlight, where you allowed me to fall asleep on the sofa, in your parlor. I could not go to sleep again, and turned out to enjoy the night, and to think over a crowd of things which came into my head. I got up into the hills, and soon saw that the woods were burning. I watched them for some time, knowing that there was nothing for it but to let them burn themselves to death" —

May shuddered.

"And then I suddenly thought about Simon, and was hurrying down to save him, when, as I say, I caught sight of you."

May listened, still looking at him with that pale, unsatisfied gaze.

"But, before all that?" she urged him. "Do you remember what happened in the evening, and yesterday, and the day before?"

"Of course I do," he said. "On the day before yesterday I escorted Miss Archbold to Camlough, and returned to Monasterlea yesterday evening. I came home late, and very tired, and was allowed to sleep upon your sofa. How this came to be is the only thing I am not perfectly clear about. But why do you question me like this? and what does it all signify?"

May looked half relieved, yet still terrified.

"Paul," she said, "it was April when you went to Camlough with Katharine Archbold; and now it is July."

"May, you have been dreaming!" he cried.

"O Paul, O Paul! it is you who have been out of your senses. You went to Camlough; you became ill, and lost your mind, and they kept you there. I went and stole you away that you might be cured. While you were gone, Simon ill-used the people, and then they were in distress. Last night they told you this; and, in your madness, you threatened to murder Simon. I soothed the idea out of your mind, and you fell asleep. Afterwards, when you awoke, I heard you quit the house, and followed you in terror lest the idea of doing harm might still be working in your mind. I found Simon's door open; and, O God, Paul! he is lying murdered in his chair! I thought you had done it in your madness. Forgive me, Paul! I thought it was in your madness."

Paul had become deadly pale. "Is this all true?" he said. "Am I dreaming, or are you?"

"Neither, neither, — we are both too wide awake. It is all true that I have said; but you did not murder Simon, Paul? Your senses had returned to you when you wakened out of your sleep? You know what you have been doing all the time since you left the house?"

Paul reeled under her words, and leaned heavily against a tree. May stood before him like a figure of snow, and waited for his answer. The fire hissed and roared, and they neither saw nor heard it.

"I remember all distinctly," he said at last. "I have not the slightest doubt. My mind has been sound and clear since I wakened out of my sleep, and left the house. I know what I have been doing, and I did not murder Simon. Must I believe all that you tell me? — it is unspeakably strange and awful!"

"He did not do it," said May, speaking to herself in a kind of rapture. "He did not do it at all — he did not even know of it. Stay, Paul; indeed I will not faint. I have turned a little blind; but, indeed, I shall not faint."

He held her up in his arms till the swoon-

ing sensation left her. Suddenly a sharp cry broke from her.

"The curse is now at an end," she said: "the last miser is dead! Even the prophecy is fulfilled — murdered!" she shuddered.

"Not by a kinsman of his own," said Paul.

"No," said she; "but still the curse is ended, and you are free, and need fear no more."

"I do not fear any thing," he said, "unless it be pain for you."

It was very plain, indeed, that whatever mischievous powers had hitherto irritated and maddened Paul, had at last given up their hold of him, and had left him in possession of the faculties that God had given him. He spoke and moved with a calm and self-contained air which May had never noticed as belonging to him. Thoughtful and awe-struck as he was at this moment, there was still no trace of that confusion of trouble — that gloom and nervous dread — which had always been so painfully visible in him when grief or perplexity had thrust themselves in his way. Even in his joy there had always been a feverishness and uncertainty which had not suggested peace nor any well-grounded happiness. Now there was a quiet look of strength in his face, — an expression of resolved content in his eyes, as if he would say, "Come what may, I will weather this storm;" for he already saw it coming, though May did not as yet. She thought of nothing at the moment but the wondrous change in Paul; and joy, mingled with awe, filled up all her consciousness, leaving no room for anticipation of things to come. Paul was restored to her, or rather given to her newly. As she clung to his arm, and he led her from the spot, she felt him to be at last possessed of that power, strong and fine, on which she could repose, by which he should govern himself and others without hinderance of doubt or fear. What her faith had discerned latent in him, hidden by the overshadowing of some mystery inscrutable, she now beheld manifested to her senses. Truly and indeed she had got matter for joy. Hitherto she had been the stronger, — had battled for him and protected him as the man might protect the woman. Now the God-given strength and dignity of man had appeared, and asserted its superiority over her own; and, with a sigh brimful of bliss, the woman fell back into her place.

Paul led her away, with her face to the fields and the cool river. He wanted to bring her home as quickly as possible, so that he might return, and have Simon's body carried decently from the house before the flames should get round the walls. As they hurried along they saw numbers of people running from all sides, attracted by the strange spectacle of the burning woods; all the early risers in the neighborhood having been attracted from their homes by so extraordinary a sight. They were talking and gesticulating as they ran, suggesting causes for the phenomenon, and giving vent to their amazement.

"Oh, good Lord!" cried a woman, "the divil himsel' must ha' whisked a spark out o' hell wid him by mistake when he was night-walkin' as usual in the woods!"

"Whisht wid yer blatherin'," said a stout farmer. "The heat o' the weather's jist enough for to do it. A flash o' fork lightnin' when the branches is that dhry!"

"A wheen o' sparkles from yon cursed fires that the shepherds has for ever goin' night and day!" suggested a third. "Oh, murther! here's Misther Paul and Miss May hersel'."

"They've been lookin' after Simon," said a fourth. "Bad as he is, a body couldn't see him burnt."

"God knows frizzlin' would be too good for him all the same. Save ye, Misther Paul! This is a terrible night we have."

"Very strange and terrible," said Paul. "But there is something more awful still, up at the house. Simon Finiston has been murdered."

"Murdered!" A hum of horror rose and sank into silence. There was an extraordinary look on every face.

"God knows he desarved it!" cried a woman fiercely, breaking the silence.

"Oh, ay!" said a man, "but some wan be to done it on him."

"That's the point," said the farmer solemnly, with a sombre look at Paul. "Thou shalt not kill."

Some of the people looked askance at the young couple, and others gazed away from them with grief and embarrassment in their faces. Paul quickly saw the signs of the storm that was coming upon him, and his greatest desire was to see May safely at home.

"I must take this lady home, my men," he said to them; "and then I will return to you. Will you hurry on, and remove the body before the flames get up to the walls? There is not a moment to lose."

"Ay, ay!" they said, assenting, and moved slowly on. There was a heavy doubt on their minds, and Paul knew it.

"Till wan o' them be murdered by a kinsman of his own," muttered the farmer

to himself. "I did not think Paul Finiston had it in him."

"Oh, ye coward!" cried a woman who caught or divined his words. "Oh, ye ill-minded man!"

"I didn't say nothin'," said the man. "It's the law's affair, not mine."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE FOOL'S SAD FATE.

When Katherine Archbold, sitting on the lawn in the middle of her guests, was able to disentangle her mind from the flatteries which had wound themselves about it, she became suddenly and vexatiously aware that Paul had left her side, and was no longer within reach of her hand. As soon as she made this discovery her mood so quickly changed, and seemingly with no reason, that the guests who had been worshipping her withdrew, shrugging their shoulders, and commenting on her temper. The day broke soon after, and the whole crowd of fantastic creatures fled. Sunrise found Katherine in frantic humor: Paul was not to be heard of; was nowhere to be seen. Her father suggested that he might have strayed out over the hills in his meaningless way, and have hurt or lost himself, very high up in the hills. "Let us go out at once, and look for him," said Sir John; and Katherine agreed readily, and they went out on the hills and searched.

The party of seekers went this way and that way, taking different paths. They sought for many hours; but, in the heat of the day, gave up the effort, while Sir John sent messengers to Tobereevil and Monasterlea. In the dawn of the next morning Katherine was out again upon the hills, unable to rest, haunted by a half-formed ghastly fear that Paul would be found lying dead in some gorge of the hills, or at the foot of some precipice. In the darkness he might have missed his footing, and fallen from a great height. With a mantle thrown over her head, and dress careless for once, with pallid face and frightened eyes, she went clambering up steep rocks and looking over the edges, peering round corners of cliffs, and creeping down into ravines, starting at every black object that came within her vision, as if it had been the thing for which she was seeking. She got at last into a narrow gorge which descended between high cliffs down to a narrow and basin-like valley, hollowed out of the very crown of one of the mountains. It was toilsome work, getting safely to the bottom, and she emerged wearily into the open waste which was the valley; hearing as she did so the sound of a human voice weeping, and talking incoherently. A few steps further she came on a spectacle, ghastly enough, if not actually so sad as that which she had feared to see.

It was the corpse of Con the fool, lying bruised and disfigured at the foot of the cliff, with Tibbie bending over him, wringing her shrivelled hands, and mourning into the deaf ear of the dead. Her lamentation was in Irish; but, from time to time, she raised the dismal sobbing "keen," prolonged it for a few minutes with frantic energy, then dropped it again with a wail of despair, and went on with her incoherent mutterings. It was awful to see and hear this old creature, herself livid as a corpse, talking aloud to the dead in the silence of the wilderness.

Con lay upon his back, having evidently fallen from a great height; for his brow was deeply wounded. Tibbie had straightened his limbs as well as she could; his arms lay by his side, and one hand held a pistol; the fingers clinched on it as if it had been a foe whom he had griped to death. Some force would be needed to remove it from the grasp of those frozen fingers. Katherine stood gazing on this scene in silent amazement. She had been looking for death; and here was death, accomplished by the very means which she had supposed likely to inflict it in such a place. Here, indeed, was somebody who had been killed by a fall from those sharp overhanging cliffs. Only it was not Paul the madman, but Con the fool.

Katherine stood gazing with a feeling that she had been tricked by her eyes, or understanding, till Tibbie looked up by chance, and saw her. The "keen" died on the old woman's lips when she beheld the unexpected intruder on her grief; and a harsh, growling sound broke from her instead, as she rose quickly to her feet with her eyes fixed on Katherine. She advanced a few steps, tottering, and holding both hands before her, just as the sun rose above the opposite peaks of the valley, lighting up the strange scene with a jubilant splendor.

"It's you!" cried Tibbie hoarsely, "it's you, is it? Yer come to take yer sport out o' me. You an' the divil that has cheated me betune ye! Look at him there, a corpse, — my lad that was to ha'

been master of Tobereevil, wid murther on his soul, an' blood upon his face. Con, avourneen, alanna! the purty lady's come to have her laugh over ye now. We'll laugh wid her, my darlin', — ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Her wild laughter sobbed itself away into the terrible "keen," and the rocks rang their dismal echoes as if in sympathy with her woe.

"How did it happen?" asked Katherine, disgusted at the scene, yet curious all the time.

"Happen!" shrieked Tibbie. "*She* dares to ask me how did it happen! It happened by way o' this," she said, drawing something from her bosom: "the divil that you give me, that was promised to do my will; a divil that worked agin me that ye might get yer laugh at me! Bad luck came down on me from the first day I tuk it out o' yer han's. Take back yer mandhrake, lady! an' may curses go back to ye wid it, an' light on yer heart!"

So saying, she flung something right at Katherine's breast, — the mandrake which Katherine had carved for her, half in malice and half in fun. At another time Miss Archbold would have laughed, and flung the thing back to her; but now the terrified young woman had got something in her mind which excluded both mirth and anger; and the manikin fell unheeded into the grass, to remain there and rot under the sun and rains. Tibbie had said that Con was dead, and with a murder on his soul. Who, then, was also dead? Whom had the fool murdered?

"How did it happen?" she repeated, with a new meaning in her question, thinking that two creatures without reason had met, and quarrelled, and that both were dead. "You spoke of murder," said Katherine: "whom has he murdered?"

"Murther!" screamed Tibbie. "Who said he had murthered any wan? If any wan dares to say it, I'll kill them wid this!"

She lifted a heavy stone, and rushed towards Katherine, who turned and fled round the corner of the cliff, nor drew her breath till she had toiled her way up again through the gorge, and was safe out of reach of her wretched and feeble foe. In fear and trembling she then continued her search, fully persuaded now that Paul had indeed been brought to untimely death, but met nothing on the hills to relieve her suspense. At last, when utterly wearied and unable to go farther, she returned to the castle, her face wild and white, her dress torn and disordered, no longer the proud beauty, only a scared and remorseful creature who had forgotten self at last in care for another. Returning to her own dressing-room, however, she was startled to see the spectacle she had become, and the old Katherine Archbold revived within her again.

Come what might, there was nothing in the world worth the grief that could transform a woman like that. She would not be haggard and ugly, even if Paul were murdered, and the Tobereevil treasures lost forever. May must, at all events, suffer quite as much as herself; and May was a weak creature, and could not get over it as she would do. She dressed herself perfectly; and, her vanity thus comforted, she presented herself in the breakfast-room, where her father was already waiting for her. Her mother was ill in bed; but that was not to be thought about at present. Katherine had quite enough on her hands, without thinking about her mother.

Sir John was walking up and down the room in excitement.

"Katherine," he said, as she entered, "have you heard this awful news? You must nerve yourself for a shock; but I have no doubt that you can bear it."

He did not mean to be satirical, for he had believed in Katherine's sincerity for once.

"He is dead, I suppose," said Katherine; and her face was white enough.

"He! Paul? No; but old Finiston, his uncle, has been murdered."

"Well!" said Katherine eagerly, with Tibbie's words and the truth flashing into her mind at once.

"Paul is suspected of the crime," said Sir John solemnly; "Paul and that pretty little girl at Monasterlea. It seems he had been paying attentions to her as well as to you. I cannot understand it, I confess. When he left us here, he went straight to Miss Mourne's house; and the strangest thing of all is, that they say he is now in his proper senses. He was seen about Monasterlea the day after he left us, and the murder was committed on the very next night. He and the young girl were met coming from the miser's house at daybreak in the morning, by some people who had run out to see a fire, which, strangely enough, has broken out in the woods, and I believe is burning yet. They say he told them the old man was murdered, and took the matter quite coolly. It is all exceedingly strange. As a magistrate, I am bound to be busy in the affair, and must go to Tobereevil for the inquest."

Katherine stood grasping the back of a

chair, and gazing with distended eyes at her father's face.

"And the girl?" she asked presently. "Is she also suspected?"

"Yes," said Sir John, "I believe so. There is something about a spot of blood on her dress."

Katherine sank into a seat, and said nothing. It was now all plain to her about the murder.

Con had done it; and Paul and May had discovered it when they went out like the rest to see the fire. Paul was in his right senses; and he and May were just as they had been before she divided them, except that they were under a grievous cloud of suspicion, overwhelmed with disgrace and grief. A word from her would even now divert this trouble from them, leaving them happy in each other, and the possession of wealth untold. And should she have to do this?

She could not do it yet — of that she was very sure. She sat quite still for some time, hating Paul and May with all her heart. "Let them be accused!" she said, "I will not speak." She shuddered a little, and her father bade her take some breakfast. And she went to the table, and sat down and ate.

"I shall go with you," she said to her father. "I must see the end of this."

"It would be much better taste for you to stay where you are," said Sir John.

But Katherine was not used to think much about matters of taste.

When May returned to the cottage she found Bridget and Nanny at the gate, watching the fire, and hearing news from the passers-by.

They looked amazed at seeing Paul and May coming quickly down the road. Paul left May a little way from the gate, and hastened back towards Tobereevil, as he had promised he would do. May passed in at the gate.

"O Miss May, Miss May!" cried Bridget, "there's blood on your dress!"

May looked down at it, startled. "Simon Finiston has been murdered," she said, shuddering, and went on into the house.

Her aunt was not awake; for it was only four o'clock, and the cottage was quite still in the early summer sunshine. For dear life, May could not have helped being unutterably happy, in spite of the awful sights which had lately passed before her eyes: that Paul was well and safe was a good which must outweigh all the troubles of the earth. It was true, she felt weary and shaken with the recent shocks she had sustained; her head was dizzy, and her limbs stiff; but she felt nothing inconvenient to her, not even suffering of the body. She knelt and poured out her thankfulness to Heaven; then sleep and utter weariness overpowered her; and, throwing herself on her bed, she slept soundly until breakfast-time.

On awakening, the horror of the murder, with its attendant and glaring horror of the fire, rose luridly in her mind; but she had left all that with God before sleeping, and this morning she would think of nothing but her joy. Paul met her coming down the hall, — pale, certainly, but fair and fresh-robed as a lily, and smiling out of eyes that denied any cause for gloom. Paul looked at her silently; and the love in his heart could not refuse her a smile in answer to her own; but there was sadness in the smile, — not of the old kind, which May now looked no more to see, but a new and reasonable sadness, which had nothing to do with fret or fear. He took her hands in his own, and drew her into the parlor that they might talk.

"What is it, Paul?" she asked, feeling that there was something which she did not yet know.

"You have borne a great deal for me," he said. "Can you still bear something more?"

She blenched a little, for her physical powers were worn somewhat low; but she said firmly, "I can, Paul."

"God bless you!" he said, with a solemn passion that made her tremble, knowing there was something heavy, indeed, to be yet borne.

"May," he said, "you and I are suspected of this murder!"

"Are we? Paul!" She drew a long breath, broken by neither sigh nor sob. "Well, we can bear it till the truth be found out. Why are we suspected?"

"Circumstances are against us — don't you perceive it? We were met coming from the place so early — and — and — there was blood upon your dress!"

"I see; but I shall explain how that got there."

"My love! don't you see that your explanation will tell against us — against me, at least — more than any thing else. Then, there is that idea in the people's minds about the prophecy that a Finiston would be murdered by a kinsman of his own."

They looked in each other's faces, — two poor young creatures, — brave in their conscious innocence, but with all the world against them. Paul drew her to his heart,

and thus they met their great woe. May quickly recovered herself.

"Of course we must take this solemnly, Paul, but not too much in earnest. We know we did not do it, neither you nor I; and some one else did. God will reveal all; and, meantime, we must not let ourselves be crushed."

"No, darling: we will not let ourselves be crushed."

He held her hands tightly within his, and felt that thus linked together they must, indeed, stand strong. Heaven could not forsake one so innocent and trustful as the woman who was bound with him in this martyrdom.

"We need not tell Aunt Martha yet, Paul — unless it is unavoidable. It would kill her in an hour."

"No, we need not tell her," said Paul. "Not, at least, till the inquest is over."

When Miss Martha appeared, she was enlightened as to the events of the night, but was not informed of the crowning trouble that was impending. A few groans and shudders expressed her horror at the tale, as it was related to her; but she was deeply affected, and sore old spots smarted badly in her heart. She did not complain of these, however, but let them wait till she could see to them in the privacy of her chamber. Her grief could not be such as to deaden her appreciation of the good things which must be the issue of this evil. It was horrible, indeed, that Simon should have been murdered, but an excellent thing for the country that he was dead. It was good for Paul and good for May; and the trouble could not be any thing to compare with the delightful comfort of seeing Paul Finiston master of Tobereevil and great wealth, sitting there in his own character, in possession of sound reason and perfect health, by the side of his promised wife.

"And so the old house is burning, you say, Paul! Well, that is no harm: you never could have made use of it, and it is better it should fall. I have never heard of a more singular coincidence — the fire and — and — the other event happening in one night. Does any one know how the fire could have happened?"

"It is thought the heat might have caused it, or sparks falling from the furze-fires on the mountains. The timber being so dry a little thing would do it. God grant it may be a type of the purification of the country from the old evil!"

Miss Martha looked at him with great approval.

"The same idea has been in my own mind," she said.

"One could imagine," said May, "that all the evil that has haunted the place had concentrated itself in the heart of the woods, and burnt itself to death out of the heat of its own passion. And with it ends the legend of the curse of Tobereevil."

Miss Martha said nothing, but looked into her teapot. She had always denied that there was any meaning, however shadowy, in the story of the curse. She had just made an admission which seemed inconsistent with her belief, and felt a little confused as to her own position.

The body of Simon Finiston had been carried to the barn of a neighboring farmer.

"He niver did me a good turn in his life," said the farmer; "but I'm not goin' to refuse to accommodate him now?"

So Simon was laid in the barn, where the inquest was to be held.

The mansion of Tobereevil was not long in burning to the ground. The woodwork was rotten, the place was full of draughts, and by noon that day it was a heap of smoking ruins. Then it was that the rain began to fall, heavily, like arrows let loose from the clouds, and, after it had descended for some hours, the fire in the woods began to slacken. The mansion was a great mouthful, which seemed to have at last appeased its hunger. The rain fell and fell, and the fire hissed and slackened; it had raged long enough, and now it should rage no more. The flames struggled and writhed in their effort to devour every branch that waved on Tobereevil ground; but the rain said no, and had its way, for a whole sea of water seemed let loose out of the heavens upon the trees. The fire was over-mastered, and sank dying in the thickets. Then, for two miles, the land was a charred and desolate waste, with here and there a ghastly trunk standing erect, — a black and dismal remnant of the splendors that had been. The densest and grandest, the darkest and most mysterious, half of the miser's kingdom of trees was swept as with a breath out of the world. The very heart of the Wicked Woods was burnt to a cinder.

It was hard for May and Paul to live through that day. Paul did not hide himself, being abroad among the people; but May had to sit still, and hear her aunt's oft-repeated wonders and speculations as to who could have committed the murder, and who should be suspected of it. "Depend on it," said Miss Martha, "it has been done by some of those poor wretches whom he rooted out of their homes. The murderer is by this time on board ship for America, and will never be heard of more."

May shivered, as she could not but acknowledge to herself that might very possibly be true. Then, how was a foul suspicion to be taken from Paul's name and her own? Must they die for this deed, or live out their lives under a shadow whose gloom could never be lightened? She had also to observe the people passing and repassing, in spite of the rain, and see their furtive looks of awe cast towards the cottage. To avoid seeing this, she turned her back upon the window.

At last she succeeded in escaping from her aunt; and, hiding in her room, she concentrated all the powers of her soul in prayer. When unable to kneel from weariness, she sat on the side of her bed, with clasped hands, still praying. God must send her aid. God would send her aid. She turned her eyes away from her tribulation, finding it impossible to look it in the face, and remain calm. She gazed over it, and past it, at the One to whom good and evil are known. God must see her appealing eyes looking constantly to him for help.

A knock came to the door, and old Bid presented herself. May shrank from her a little, knowing the thought that had hold of the people's minds; but the faithful old woman saw the anguish in her eyes, and, creeping to her side, knelt down at her feet, and kissed the hem of her dress.

"Honey, honey!" she whispered, "don't you sit there wid that look upon yer face! I'd rather they said I did it mysel'. If you an' him had a hand in it, then 'twas me that did the deed for ye!"

"God is going to see to it," said May.

"Throth, an' so is Bid! Somebody be to done the thing. We haven't foun' yet what's gone wid Tibbie."

"Tibbie!" May started. "Oh, don't let us do a wrong to any one."

"No more we won't," said Bid; "but Tibbie's not to be seen. Some says she was forgot about, and burnt up in the house. I don't think she's burned, an' I won't close my eyes till they ha' seen her. I'm off now to look for her, an' don't you go fret. The people's only dazed like, and can't see where they're goin'. It's the Divil's partin' fling has threwn a fistful o' dust in their eyes."

Bid shook her cloak straight, tied her kerchief tight on her head, and grasped her staff in preparation for a ramble. May felt the old creature's sympathy very precious; and Providence might work through Bid as well as through any other. She pressed the brown and withered hand in both her own; and then Bid went away, and May tried to be patient.

CHAPTER XL.

THE LAST TROUBLE.

THE rain ceased early next morning, and the day proved as lovely a day as ever midsummer brought to the world. As May walked down the garden, the roses that brushed her gown were all fresh and laden with dew. Birds were singing blithely, the sun shining goldenly, the world was beautiful, and seemed to call on human nature to rejoice; yet the shadow of a great crime was lying upon it, and the black charred trees away to westward were the witnesses that bore testimony to its reality. May was going to the inquest. Could it be that God had willed that she should never more be glad while she lived in this beautiful world. This was a wicked and horrible fear that arose in her mind as she breathed the happy air, and felt her youth leaping within her; but she banished it on the instant.

Aunt Martha could not understand why May should want to be present at such a very painful scene.

"It is every way unseemly," she said. "Paul, do not let her go."

But May said, "Give me my own way. I have a reason, which I shall tell you by and by."

Of all that might have to be told, she did not dare to think.

As May and Paul walked across the fields between the blooming dykes and singing hedges, they were overtaken by Sir John Archbold and his daughter, who were riding to make part of a crowd which was assembling at the farmer's house. Katherine bowed haughtily; Sir John was more courteous, yet there was something in his manner which gave Paul to understand that here was no all-trusting friend. Paul let the riders pass, and walked on with his head high. Many people had assembled at the barn. There were two other magistrates besides Sir John Archbold, who were come from a distance, full of curiosity about Paul Finiston and his story, and who had quite made up their minds as to the likelihood of his guilt. The whole history of the family, as they knew it, was a romance; and this murder made the culminating incident of the tale. For an excitable and whimsical young man, come of a bad race, tried beyond endurance by one so intolerable as the miser, nothing could be more natural than that he should end a violent quarrel by a crime like this. They pitied him a good deal, and hoped

that, at his trial, the jury who should find him guilty would also recommend him to mercy. As to May, they simply wondered and could guess nothing.

The people divided, and stood back respectfully to let her pass, and the women began to weep when they looked in her face.

"She niver had act nor part in it" said one; "I wouldn't believe it if her han's was covered wid blood."

"Whist, whist," said another, "sure the angels is takin' care o' her."

They stood together within the doorway with all eyes fixed on them; looking grave but fearless, so that their accusers found themselves silent and ashamed. Katherine had not dismounted from her horse, but was only a few yards distant from them, and could have touched them with her whip. All the way as she rode down from Camlough the thought had been present to her mind, that it was she who must save these lovers, and bestow on them perfect joy; must give them each other, an unsullied name, the world's sympathy, and boundless wealth. She had thought she would try and do it, after she had first seen their pain, beheld them crushed and terrified, and humbled to the dust; but here she saw no terror nor any anguish of shame. They faced their fellow-creatures serene, and almost happy. From time to time they looked in each other's eyes; and Katherine shut her lips, and the day's business began.

Witness after witness came up and told his story. It appeared, from the evidence, that one of Simon's well-known pistols was missing; and it was believed that, with this weapon, the murder had been done. Paul was about to be questioned, when Sir John took him aside, and spoke to him, —

"Finiston!" he said, "I am deeply sorry for you. Things are telling very plainly against you in this matter. I must say I perceive that you are now acting and speaking like a reasonable man, but quite lately I saw you otherwise. Take my advice, and plead insanity."

"I will plead nothing but the truth," said Paul; "and on the night of the murder I was in possession of all my senses."

Sir John was puzzled, and said no more, believing that Paul had committed the crime while his mind was astray, and that the shock of all its consequences had restored him to his senses. Paul was now allowed to tell his story. He gave a sketch of his whole life, confessing his horror of the miser, and of the curse which was attached to the family inheritance. He had felt an especial dread of being driven to commit that crime with which he stood charged to-day. He had struggled against the feeling, which was simply a nervous horror, had despised it, and wondered at its hold upon his mind. In the early part of the last six months a fitful gloom had taken possession of him, and since then he had suffered from a mysterious disorder of the mind, which deprived him of his memory, and deadened all his faculties. From this affliction he had been set free in a strange and sudden manner; and he did not attempt to account for either the disorder or the cure. Had the crime been committed while he was in a state which rendered him not accountable for his acts, then would he not have presumed to declare that he was innocent of the deed. Of much that had happened to him during the months lately past, of much that he had said and done, he was utterly forgetful; but, on the night of Simon's murder, he had been in possession of his reason. He described his waking in Miss Martha's parlor, his going out to walk, and to think over matters which pressed into his mind, his first sight of the woods on fire, and meeting with May, who told him about the murder. He was listened to attentively; but his story sounded improbable, and he knew it.

When May's turn came she spoke bravely, feeling as if Paul's credit depended on her courage. She was obliged to confess the reason of her anxiety when she found that he had left the house, and the terror that had urged her to follow him to Tobereevil in the night. She described her finding the murdered man, and her swoon on the floor of the blood-stained chamber, her amazement at the fire, and entire satisfaction when she met Paul coming to look for her in perfect possession of his senses. "And I know that he did not do it," she said, "and that the murderer will be found." There was deep pity for her in every face, but her story told terribly against Paul.

Sir John bore witness to the young man's strange state while staying at his house. Two days ago he should have described him as a person utterly unaccountable for his actions. Katherine was also called upon to give evidence, and looked white and sullen as she made her statement. One might have supposed from her face, that she was the person who had been accused of the murder, as she glanced towards May and Paul, who stood together, neither stricken nor overwhelmed, but only grave and very quiet, as if they waited breathlessly for the word of truth that should turn their sorrow into joy. She

was not going to speak it for them. Let things take their course! She stated that Paul had been an insane man during the whole time of his visit at Camlough, and that he had left that place strangely, on the night of the entertainment. All evidence having been taken, the coroner addressed the jury. He spoke pityingly of the young man who had been afflicted as described by so many witnesses; but it was plain that he had no doubt as to Paul's having committed the crime. The jury were quite of his way of thinking; men who had suffered bitterly under the dead man's rule, and believed nothing could be more natural than the impulse that should lead a man to shoot such a wretch when provoked, in the heat of quarrel. Nevertheless, they considered the matter for fully half an hour, during which time May sat on a heap of straw, gazing out of the barn, past the people, with still that steadfast expectant look in her eye which had scarcely left it since this sore trouble began. Paul stood beside her with folded arms, looking destruction in the face, like a brave but condemned soldier waiting the signal that shall send his comrade's bullet through his heart.

The crowd had been very quiet within and without the barn, but suddenly there was a movement; and Katherine, who was on horseback, uttered a cry, and reeled in her saddle as if she would fall. Some men were approaching, followed by a little crowd of women and children. The men carried a bier! As the procession came nearer and crossed the fields, it was seen that a cart followed the bier, and that somebody was lying on the cart. There was great excitement immediately; people ran out to meet the unexpected newcomers, and a little storm of cries and groans arose upon the air when the two crowds met, and explanations had been made. Then there was a great tumult in the barn, so that when the jurors appeared to give their verdict they were not attended to; and the words, "Wilful murder against Paul Finiston," were only heard by a few. As the words were spoken, the crowd burst up to the door of the barn, swayed, divided, and fell back, and the bier which the men had carried was laid on the floor, bearing the wounded body of Con the fool.

"My God, another!" said the coroner; and the noise of the crowd ceased, and the silence of horror fell upon the place. Two or three women broke out crying, and were hustled away into a corner; while all eyes were turned to the door again, as the cart stood before it, and another surprise was expected. The men were lifting some one out of the cart, — a living body, wrapped in blankets; and this they also carried into the barn, and placed on a heap of straw. Bid was beside them, and directed them where to lay their burden; and when the creature who had been thus carried was placed lying in the straw, there was seen the weird and ugly face of Tibbie, the miser's housekeeper, pinched and drawn with agony, and wet with the dews of approaching death. She opened her dim eyes, and gazed around her, then closed them again, and groaned dismally.

"Aisy, woman, aisy!" said Bid soothingly, as she settled her head more comfortably in the straw. "Don't be unpatient. Spake up like a Christian, an' the pain'll soon be done."

Then Bid turned to Paul: "Would yer honor step to wan side a little bit?" she said, courtseying with deep respect, "so as how Tibbie don't see you where you stan'."

Paul moved away, and then the deep breathless silence of expectation reigned in the barn.

"What does all this mean?" asked the coroner, looking from one to another of the new-comers. A stout man, from a distant part of the mountains, answered him, —

"It's wan Tibbie, — this poor woman ye see, sir, that has to make some kind o' a statement afore she goes. This other ould woman, Bid the Thraveller, yer honor, — a decent sowl, — she foun' Tibbie lying her lone upon the mountain, an' the body o' this poor fool-boy at her side. So we brought them all down here, yer honor; for there's a long story to tell."

"The statement had better be made," said the coroner; "for the woman has not many hours to live."

A groan from Tibbie followed his words. "I will not die bad," she whispered: "I will not go to the Divil. He niver did nothin' for me, an' I won't stan' to him now. I always said I would turn to good in the latther end."

Then she began her confession. It was rambling and disjointed, and spoken between gasps and moans, while Bid supported her head, and comforted her with little words of sympathy as she went on. By dint of patience and questioning, her story was at last clearly put upon paper.

On the evening before the discovery of the murder she had heard a noise in her master's sitting-room, and reached the door just in time to hear the report of fire-arms, and to see Con the fool rush past her flour-

ishing one of her master's pistols in his hand. He fled shrieking out of the open hall-door. Finding her master dead, she became terrified lest people should think that she had done the deed, and fled after Con, hoping to overtake him, and hide him with herself in some of the caves in the hills. After long toiling and running, she came upon him in the mountains, dancing and singing as he went along, and waving the pistol above his head. As soon as he saw her, he uttered a cry, and dashed on without looking where he was going. Following as well as she was able, she saw him suddenly disappear over a ridge of cliffs; and when she came up to these, and looked down a steep precipice, she beheld him lying, as he now lay, on the grass far beneath her. She made her way to his side, and remained there till the lady from Camlough found her. "Her that has the fine goold hair," said Tibbie, "an' give me the mandhrake." The lady found her first and talked to her, but she frightened her away. Afterwards Bid came to her; and then she was very ill, and glad enough to be looked after. The running had been too much for her, and then the rain, she thought, had killed her. Cramps had got hold of her, and a terrible illness. She had sworn to Bid to tell the truth if she would promise to get Con decently buried.

When Katherine was mentioned, all eyes were turned on the proud lady who had known somewhat of all this, and had been silent. Katherine's face was not pleasant to look at, but she sat calmly on her horse without wincing.

After this the Kearneys made their appearance, and told of the fool's grief at parting with them, and his rage at the miser when the people were turned from their houses. Next came the little girl who had given him a drink out of her pail, and had been terrified at his fit of frenzy when she told him that Simon had sent Nan out of the country. Many tears were shed for Con as these simple facts were stated, — for the poor loving fool who had been so harmless and so kind. When all had at last been told, the sick woman was carried to a neighboring cabin, and the jury put their heads together, and returned another verdict.

Then there broke out a buzz of joyous excitement in the barn. The magistrates and the coroner stepped forward to shake Paul by the hand. Farmers and mountain men, cotters and laborers, cheered him, and looked in his face, half-laughing and half-sobbing. The women wept wildly, and struggled to kiss his hand. As their suffering had been deep, while forced to believe him guilty, just so was their joy extravagant at being able to make him a hero. He was their master, their landlord, — the man who had banished the curse forever from their land, and who was now going to rule over them in peace and kindness.

May had laid her head against some friendly sheaves of straw, and was not seen or heard of till the first tumult had subsided. Then she whispered to Paul, "Let me rest a little;" and Paul and the farmer's wife carried her into the farmhouse, where she lay on a homely bed in a little shaded bedroom, and rested perfectly, knowing that now her troubles were at an end. Afterwards, when the crowd had gone, Paul and she walked home together.

No one had congratulated Paul more heartily than Sir John Archbold. He now remembered that the young man was a millionnaire, and that he had looked upon him as his future son-in-law. He would fain have viewed him again in that light, but did not quite see how that might be, since he had heard May spoken of as his promised wife. Katherine only could enlighten him as to this mystery.

"My dear," he said to her, "you are, no doubt, delighted to find our friend so fully acquitted. We may now look on him with favor. It remains for you to tell me — shall I ask him to come to Camlough?"

"No," said Katherine angrily, and rode on with her dark face turned away from the people.

Sir John insisted on stopping at Monasterlea to announce to Miss Martha the happy acquittal of Paul. Much against his daughter's wish, he reined in at the gate; and the old lady came fluttering down the garden-path, in her cap-ribbons, to meet him.

"Well, madam!" he said, "this day has ended better than it began. I suppose you have heard that the mystery is cleared up, and the young man acquitted."

Miss Martha started; but she was a little in awe of Sir John, and did not like to question him. She concluded that she had misunderstood him, and answered, —

"Ah, I am sorry for the poor fool, but God has great mercy for such as he."

Sir John thought she took the matter coolly, but that was not his affair.

Miss Martha could not let these friends pass her door without inviting them to partake of some refreshment. Sir John agreed readily to her wishes in this respect, but Katherine sullenly declined the proffered kindness.

"Well then, my dear," said Sir John, "I

must allow you to wait for me where you are; for I feel utterly famished, and we are a long way from home." And he followed Miss Martha, and left Katherine sitting disconsolate on her horse near the gate. She was very angry at this treatment; but her father had lately shown her that if she would have her will on all occasions so also would he. So she had to wait under the shelter of a bush of honeysuckle, and her reflections were not pleasant as she did so.

Meantime Paul and May quitted the farm-house, and were walking slowly across the fields, as exquisitely happy as two people could be, in spite of all the shocks which had lately tried their courage. It could not be a laughing, gleeful happiness to-day; but that also would doubtless come by and by. There was plenty of time for mirth: life was sunny before them.

Just as they left the last field-gate, and came on the road, their eyes were attracted by the sight of a heavy vehicle rolling to meet them from the distance, preceded by a cloud of dust. They stood by the dyke to wait till it should pass; for it was thundering along at such a pace that it seemed likely to overrun them. As it came nearer, they saw that it was a four-in-hand coach, and that a gentleman was driving with a lady by his side. The gentleman took off his hat, and waved it high above his head. He waved it to May and Paul. Who could the gentleman be?

"It is Christopher Lee!" cried May in astonishment. The next moment the coach was pulled up before them, and there sat Christopher, bare-headed and smiling at them, as if this meeting was the happiest thing in the world. Another moment, and he leaped to the ground, and was shaking May and Paul each by a hand, and introducing them to the lady who sat aloft on the coach.

"My wife, Miss Mourne. Mr. Finiston, my wife." The lady was a pretty, bright creature, who leaned down from her high place, and squeezed May's hands, and looked with eager gaze into the faces of her husband's friends. She was an artless, fresh, young thing, all glittering in pretty clothes, which were rich enough for a duchess. There had scarcely been time to say "Welcome" and "How do you do?" before a large face was thrust out of the interior of the coach; and a voice of complacent melancholy was heard expostulating with them all: —

"Let me out, I say, Christopher, my son! Am I already forgotten in my old age. A-a-ah! the young will ever push the old people aside. My dear Miss May! I am waiting to embrace you. You were always as a daughter to me. Lucy will not be jealous — I told her so long ago."

As it was known to be a work of some difficulty to get Mrs. Lee out of the coach, May stood upon the steps, and allowed herself to be kissed. Afterwards, that the servants on the back seat might not be too much entertained by Mrs. Lee's fond expressions, Christopher handed his wife and May into the coach to bear her company, while Paul mounted beside him on the box, and the party moved slowly onward.

"You wonder at all this, eh?" asked Christopher, unable to withhold his news from a sympathizing friend. "There was nothing about it in my last letter."

"No," said Paul, "but it is a long time since you wrote to us."

"Yes," said Christopher: "I have been very much occupied, and, besides, I wanted to give you a surprise. To tell the truth at once, I am in possession of that property which I once lost by my folly. My wife — bless her! — is the person who was enriched by my misfortune. I could not rest a moment till I confessed this to you. I have much more to tell you when there is time. It is a very odd story; but don't think badly of me."

"I know you too well for that," said Paul kindly, for Christopher looked embarrassed. "I congratulate you warmly — with all my heart."

The ladies were not losing their time inside the coach. Little Mrs. Christopher was chattering gleefully about the goodness of her husband, his gratitude to his friends, and her own intense desire to be May's dearest friend for life; and what with her pretty, rapid speeches, interrupted by Mrs. Lee's long, complacent sighs and explanatory remarks, May had scarcely to do more than smile in the two faces that were beaming at her.

So this coachful of very happy people dashed up to the gate at Monasterlea; and there sat Katherine on her horse, waiting for her father under the honeysuckle bush. Nobody noticed her at first; for the sun was in the eyes of the two young men, and she was in the shade. As for her, she was taken by surprise; had been gazing in another direction from that by which they had come, and was in too bad a humor to turn her head for a moment to glance at passing travellers. The sudden stopping of the vehicle made her first start and look at it. Her amazement was extreme, as she saluted the two young men with a haughty

bow, and all her old triumphant spirit flashed from her eyes as she beheld Christopher. What could bring him back to these wilds where he had suffered, if not to look again upon her face?

Truly, the infatuation of man was a very curious thing. With an effort she prepared to be more gracious, seeing that Christopher rapidly descended from his seat as if to approach. He first turned to the carriage door, however, and handed out a lady whom Katherine had never seen; a lovely and dainty lady, as she saw at a glance.

There was mischief in Christopher's eye as he drew his wife's arm through his own, and led her a few steps, so that she stood with him by the side of Katherine's horse.

"Miss Archbold, allow me to present to you my wife. Lucy, you have heard me speak of Miss Archbold, a lady who did me a service for which I can never be sufficiently grateful."

Katherine gazed down at them both, with astonishment and chagrin both visible in her face. The young wife gazed at her with eyes that were trying to express nothing but polite interest; yet betrayed fear, and a little disgust, and, worse than all, pity. The two ladies exchanged a bow, and then May and Paul joined the group. So happy were both, that they could afford to be kind to Katherine. They begged her to dismount, and accompany them indoors: but, at every smile and gracious word, Katherine's face became darker, till at last she turned on them and said abruptly, "I wish you a good-morning;" plucked her horse's mouth, and rode away. Her father joined her soon afterwards, and the Archbolds were forgotten at Monasterlea.

A very happy party met now within Miss Martha's walls. The Lee family were so full of their own delight with the world that they did not notice any shadow upon their friends; and so catching was this mirth, that, under its influence, all remains of that shadow melted away. Of course they had heard nothing of the terrible events, so closely affecting their friends, which had lately happened in the neighborhood; and May and Paul felt this ignorance a relief, and were not at all eager to drag painful news under the notice of their guests. When, in the evening, the whole group, including the two old ladies, went out to sit in the open air, and enjoy the sunset under the shelter of the ruin, something of the story was told in order to account for a change in the landscape. The woods had been burned, and the miser was dead. This news did not tend to make the guests at all less merry. They only found that Paul must now be rich, which pleased them greatly, seeing that they had found their own wealth to be rather convenient.

Mrs. Lee had been overflowing all day with certain intelligence of her own, which only a sense of propriety had restrained her from pouring forth long ago She waited a propitious moment, however, when the men were conversing together about mannish things, and Miss Martha was fully occupied with the bride; and then did Mrs. Lee withdraw May under cover of her own umbrella, and tell her the sequel of her son's harrowing love-story.

"A-a-ah, my dear!" she said, "who could have imagined it would all end so happily? The world was very dark to me and Christopher on that day when we last took leave of this hospitable dwelling. My poor boy was not used to work, and, though he did his best, I feared that he would be disappointed and broken down all his life. You know he went to work in an attorney's office, and looked forward to earning a maintenance for himself."

Mrs. Lee sighed heavily, as if the earning of his maintenance were the greatest affliction that could be laid upon a man. She dwelt on the memory of this calamity with a blissful sadness, as if making a luxury out of past trouble. Finally, she nodded her head, once, twice, thrice; a different nod every time: the first expressing resignation, the second contentment, and the third delight of the most triumphant character.

"Now, I can tell you," she said, "there is nothing more to fret about. My son has got his property."

"Indeed!" said May. "The property we thought he had lost?"

"My dear ma'am! we must allow that he did lose it, through the wickedness of a woman; but it has been restored to him by the conscientiousness of another — as I may say — of the same sex. And, my dear, there never was such a love-match in the world!"

"Then the property belongs to his wife?"

"*Did* belong, my dear, till she made a present of it to her husband. The sweetest little creature! I will tell you about her. She is a Canadian, a distant connection of our own; but we never had seen and knew nothing about her. The property went to her when Christopher failed to fulfil his conditions. Her parents were Irish; and when fate made her wealthy she persuaded her guardian to bring her across the ocean to visit her 'native country,' as

she calls it. We met her in Dublin at the house of a friend, who had told me of the dear child's pity for the poor gentleman who had been so robbed and maltreated. His loss did not trouble her the less because the gain had been all her own.. She made me such a pretty speech that night, that I took her to my heart at once, and invited her to visit me. We became the best of friends; and, you may imagine, that through the feelings of a mother I mixed up a good deal of my son with my conversation, especially as she was such a sympathetic creature. It seemed she never could hear enough about his troubles and misfortunes.

"'Oh, Mrs. Lee!' she said one day, 'if I had been in her place I'd have given him all the fortune, and gone without myself, sooner than have played him such a wretched trick!'

"'My dear,' said I, 'she could not have done that; but she could have given him the fortune along with herself, and she would not do it. There is no generosity left in the world.'

"'Oh, yes, there is!' she said, and looked as if she were going to cry. 'The worst is that the people who would have the will to be generous are not those that get the opportunity.'

"Another time she said she hoped she might die young in order to leave the fortune to Christopher in her will. 'For,' she declared, 'I feel like a robber; and yet, I suppose, he would not take it if I were to make him a present of it.'

"'Indeed I think not, my dear, except under certain conditions,' I said.

"She hung her head, and would talk no more on that occasion; but I soon saw that the little good-hearted creature could think of nothing but Christopher and his beggary from morning till night. I did not neglect to point it out to my son — indeed, when have I ever failed in my duty to him? but he only got cross about it, and asked me did I want him to cap his former follies by turning fortune-hunter. 'The girl is a charming girl,' he said, 'and many will love her. She shall not be made a victim to her own kindness of heart. She will be wiser by and by, and choose a husband for herself.'

"'I believe she would choose nobody but you, if the truth were known,' I said.

"My dear ma'am, he flew in a passion, and I got nothing but ill-usage for my pains; but, when that had cooled down a little, I persuaded the sweet creature to come on a visit to our humble dwelling, where she made herself as happy as a bird, just attending on an old woman, and getting little enough attention from a very sullen host. At last, however, she lost her spirits and got pale; and then she told me she must leave us, as she had outstayed her welcome, and was giving annoyance to Christopher. He had taken a dislike to her, she said, and nothing would induce her to remain longer in the house. Of course I had to give in; and angry enough I was, to be sure, when I saw her go down the stairs with her bonnet on, and her trunks waiting in the hall. Christopher was in his study; and she turned to go in and bid him good-by, not wishing, as she said, to part in anger. She put her hand on the door, and took it away again, — she would and she wouldn't, — but at last went in, in earnest, and did not come out again in a hurry. How it happened, and what they suddenly found out to say to each other at the last moment, I never could make out; but they met as ill-humored with one another as two people could be, and they came out of the room — I was going to say man and wife — but, my dear ma'am! it's the same thing, I believe, when people are true."

"And now they have the property between them," said May. "Nothing could be fairer, and it's a very pretty story!"

"I consider it is, my dear; though some people are so ill-minded as to think differently."

"If we fret for what people will think," said May, "we might never lift a finger either for our own happiness or for that of another. Purity and honesty of intention ought to need no applause from the world."

CHAPTER XLI.

CONCLUSION.

THE woods having been destroyed, and the miser murdered by a kinsman of his own, it was proved beyond doubt that the curse must be removed from the race of Finiston forevermore. In order to make sure of this fact, some people took the trouble to inquire into the parentage of Con the fool, and ascertained, that, in truth, he had been the son of Simon's brother.

The trees were not all destroyed, only the thickest and most sombre part of them; but they were known no longer as the Wicked Woods. The charred trunks and ashes of once-spreading boughs were cleared away, and the plough went over the

earth that had borne them. The blackened walls of the old mansion were taken down, a careful search being made the while for the miser's strong box, which did not appear among the rubbish. This box contained his gold, — the accumulated gold of generations. It was well known to have existed; but no trace of any such treasure has as yet been found.

There was great consternation in the country when it became known as a certainty that the much-talked-of treasure of the misers of Tobereevil had vanished out of the world, and was never more to be seen. The wonder-loving had food for a year's gossip, and many curious stories were long in circulation as to the mysterious disappearance of the fortune. Some averred that the Evil One himself had carried it off, with the miser's soul, as part of his booty; while others, less uncharitable, suggested that the good angel who keeps watch over even the reprobate had bartered it with Satan for leave to retain possession of his immortal charge, and had borne away the sin-oppressed and long-suffering spirit to regenerate it in the cleansing waters that wash the shores of eternity. According to this fancy, the treasure had been given over as a kind of hostage to the powers of evil, securing peace to the happy descendants of a race no longer accursed. The natural idea that the strong box had been buried in the earth for perfect safety was accepted by a few, and many searches were made with spade and pickaxe, to end invariably in disappointment. Long after Paul had given up the quest, little bands of spontaneous seekers would spring up from time to time, and be seen digging about the roots of trees and burrowing under stones, still dreaming of the reward that success must bring them. Even to this day a treasure-seeker occasionally appears in the neighborhood, possessed by a sort of madness, which is the hope of finding the forgotten gold of the Finistons; but the earth obstinately refuses to give up its golden secret.

So Paul was heir to an impoverished estate, and a tenantry, the most of whom were little better than paupers. He was disappointed at first, thinking that, had the money come into his hands, he might have purified it by using the greater part of it for the good of the poor; but, when time proved that the treasure had been mysteriously removed out of reach of his hand, he allowed May to persuade him that this deprivation was a blessing.

"I cannot tell you how glad I am of it!" said May. "I suppose we could not have been exactly justified in burying the money ourselves; yet it would have been a load about our necks so long as we lived."

"Perhaps so," said Paul; "but I could have been glad to build a handsome house for my wife, to dress her like a lady, and give her the good things of the world, after the trouble she has had with me."

"I foretell about that lady she won't care for handsome houses. Now, just tell me, sir! how could I love any damp, cold, new-built mansion, all smelling of paint and mortar, as well as I do this dear old shanty, where we have been so happy among the owls and ivy? As to clothes, I expect you will be able to afford me a clean calico gown in the summer, and a warmer one in the winter, and for food — why there's the potato-field!"

"And the pigs!" said Paul, laughing, "and the cabbage garden! We shall have to be content with these for many years, as most of the income must go to set the poor people right upon their feet at last."

"I declare," said May, "what with hams and vegetables, to say nothing of fowls and fresh eggs, which I foresee will be always coming to table, we are likely to have a very hard time of it."

"I warn you that my appetite will be dreadful," said Paul. "It has increased alarmingly since I took my first step towards restoring happiness to Tobereevil. Let all our ill-luck go with the money; and if an honest man's effort can make the wilderness flourish around us, and put crooked ways straight, that effort shall not be wanting. And who knows but after all we may have riches yet."

"And have them without a curse. At present, we have got our poverty with a blessing."

In this spirit Paul and May began their married life, working together through sunshine and gloom, through hard times and good times, till, after a few years, the face of the country became changed, and prosperity began to shine upon the little world of Tobereevil. Land had been reclaimed, houses built, and gardens cultivated. The Kearneys' little farm was one of the best managed in the neighborhood; and Bid had a home of her own under the hedge of her friends' potato-field. A village sprang up with its small shops and trades; and the spire of its pretty church made a pleasant feature in the landscape. On the riverside a mill hummed its thrifty song, and corn waved on the site of the ancient mansion. Enough of the woods remained to beautify the country; but the noxious weeds and evil spirits had vanished with Tibbie

and her haunts. No one now feared the neighborhood of the trees since the burial-place of the famished had been enclosed as holy ground marked by a cross.

People visited the spot on Sunday evenings, and the children decked it with flowers: the legend lost its ghastliness, and took new and tender outlines. The country had been chastened, may be, for its sins; but God had changed his hand. The dead had got their rest, and the living were happy and at peace.

Paul's unexpected poverty revived Katherine Archbold's spirits, and caused her to think that she had had a lucky escape. This young lady lived to enjoy the triumph of marrying a duke, and becoming a leader of the fashionable world; but a sketch of her after-life would not make pleasant reading. Sir John, like many other men, paid the penalty of pride and extravagance, and the castle of Camlough passed into new hands. His wife did not live to see this change.

In due time Miss Martha, having gone to her rest beside Father Felix, the cottage in the ruins was given over to the parish priest, who, being a scholar and an antiquarian, knew how to prize the quaint abode; and who, being likewise tender-hearted, kept the graves in his care, scattering prayers over the sod thick as the dew or the daisies.

By this time the master of Tobereevil had built a dwelling of his own, on a sheltered bit of the land, not grand nor ostentatious, but a nest of prettiness and comfort. There he lived with his wife May, as long as it is good for a man to live, and as happy as it is allotted to most men to be. No trace of the cloud that had rested on him ever appeared to trouble him again. So brave and wise and genial was his nature in its maturity, that his children would laugh when "father" assured them that in his youth he had been a coward and a fool.

Yet when Paul Finiston, a man of weight in the country, a member of parliament — "a little odd in his notions; a bit of a philanthropist you know, but as honest a man as ever lived" — when this Paul Finiston and his faithful wife sat hand-in-hand at their fireside, in their old age, and looked back over the years they had spent together, they always lowered their voices, and looked wistfully in each other's eyes, when they spoke of one year in their lives when the man had been attacked by the evil that had destroyed his forefathers, and the woman had done battle for him because his hands were tied; but they are now both fast asleep under the roses at Monasterlea, and few remember vividly the story of the WICKED WOODS OF TOBEREEVIL.

THE END

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